TALLINN UNIVERSITY

ESTONIAN INSTITUTE OF HUMANITIES

Cultural Theory

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Moral epistemology and totalitarianism: reflections on Arendt, Bauman, Bernstein, and Rorty

Bachelor's thesis

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Tallinn

2015

Table of Contents

1 RESÜMEE

Antud bakalaureusetöö fookuses on moraaliepistemoloogiline problemaatika: vastused küsimusele, kuidas on võimalik teada, et miski on moraalne. Töö uurib, milliseid vastuseid sellele küsimusele võib leida 20. sajandi mõtlejate käsitlustest totalitarismi kohta. Seeläbi võib öelda, et töö eesmärgiks on pakkuda totalitaarsete ühiskondade moraaliepistemoloogilist analüüsi.

Täpsemalt peetakse siin totalitaarsetest ühiskondadest rääkides silmas kaht riiki, Stalinistlikku Nõukogude Liitu ning Kolmandat Riiki. Säärane piiritlus tuleneb suuresti ka Hannah Arendti, Zygmunt Baumani ja Richard Rorty töödes ilmnevast fookusest ning samuti on selle eesmärgiks töö mahtu limiteerida, et võimaldada järgitav ja arusaadav lähenemine. Käesoleva bakalaureusetöö põhiküsimuseks on, kuidas võiksime nende autorite töid lugedes analüüsida ja iseloomustada totalitarismi moraaliepistemoloogilisest vaatepunktist. Töö otsib vastust just sellele kesksele küsimusele. Huviks on peamiselt tavaliste inimeste moraalikäitumine, millest moraaliepistemoloogiliste positsioonide analüüs lähtub.

Moraaliepistemoloogia all mõistetakse siinkohal filosoofia haru moraalialase teadmise võimalikkusest ning peamiselt lähtutakse selles töös objektivismi, relativismi ja subjektivismi positsioonidest, ent tähelepanuta ei jää ka skepsist, ratsionalismi, (anti)fundatsionalismi ja pragmatismi puudutavad aspektid ja küsimused.

On oluline osutada tähelepanu sellele, et totalitarismikäsitlustel põhinev moraaliteadmist puudutav analüüs ei otsi epistemoloogilistest positsioonidest selgitusi inimeste käitumisele, vaid „kaardistab“ nende positsioonide omavahelise suhestumise totalitarismi kontekstis; tuues kokku erinevate mõtlejate ja eri distsipliinide esindajate sõnavarad, taotleb see bakalaureusetöö totalitarismi ühe tahu mõistmist ning moraaliepistomoloogilise debati praktikat ja rakenduslikku poolt puudutavatele aspektidele valguse heitmist.

Erinevate mõtlejate sõnavarade kokkutoomine on olulisel määral inspireeritud Bernsteini lähenemisest teoses *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism.* Säärane lähenemine taotleb rikkalikumat „tööriistakasti“ (kui kasutada Rorty metafoori) käesolevaks arutluseks ning loodab luua teadmist erinevate sõnavarade omavahelist suhestumist lähedalt uurides. Hoolimata sõnavarade ning distsipliinide (filosoofia, psühholoogia, sotsioloogia) mitmekesisusest, on antud töö puhul siiski tegu filosoofilise uurimusega.

2 INTRODUCTION

The questions asked in the thesis concern the justifications and grounding of moral judgments. A rather specific angle is taken at epistemological concerns about morality, which means an analysis of answers for knowing whether something is moral, using the disctinctions between objectivist, subjectivist, universalist, relativist etc standpoints as helpful tools for outlining the relations between the claims of those thinkers whose works are under attention.

The social arrangement of 20th century totalitarian states – for the purpose of limiting the study to a prehensible amount of examples and data, Stalinist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany are kept in mind; it is also due to the fact that both of them are in the focus of the works I discuss – addresses many sharp questions in the field of moral philosophy.

> Totalitarian society, as distinguished from totalitarian government, is indeed monolithic; all public manifestations, cultural, artistic, or learned, and all organizations, welfare and social services, even sports and entertainment, are „coordinated". There is no office and indeed no job of any public significance, from advertising agencies to the judiciary, from play-acting to sports journalism, from primary and secondary schooling to the universities and learned societies, in which an unequivocal acceptance of the ruling principles is not demanded (Arendt 2003a, 33).

Namely, the phenomenon of Third Reich as well as Stalinist Soviet Union brings to light some very important questions inside the epistemology of ethics. More precisely, in the centre of interest is the question about the possibility of moral knowledge, and what kind of answers we find to this question if we study Hannah Arendt's and Zygmunt Bauman's approaches to totalitarianism, and bring them together with the (epistemological) ideas presented by Richard Rorty and Richard Bernstein. When closely reading the works of those authors, how could we position and analyse some of the totalitarian traits described by them (especially those regarding ordinary people's moral behaviour) from the perspective of moral epistemology? This is the central question that has driven my thesis, and this is the question that I aim to answer.

In approaching this question, I have a distinction in mind that has to be highlighted: my thesis deals with both the problematic ways of answering this question (i.e., analysing the answers that highlight and elucidate the moral problematic in totalitarianism), and the answers that stem from the works of the thinkers whom I discuss. To be clear, in this thesis, I work with approaches to totalitarianism – ways in which totalitarianism has been described and thought of. The focus of the thesis is not sociological, nor historical. The main interest is to offer an epistemological mapping (more specifically, by using the objectivist/relativist/subjectivist

distinction) of the underlying philosophical positions that come to light in Arendt' and Bauman's approaches to ordinary people's moral behaviour in totalitarian societies, and additionally, of Rorty's ideas about pragmatism, ironism, contingency, diversity of vocabularies, and solidarity.

The quote of Arendt's (above) points out one of the traits most fundamental to a totalitarian society as described by her – the total control over every field of human activity, entailing an absolute demand for accepting the ruling principles. In Bernstein's writing, we can find why understanding domination, power, and political movements is necessary for philosophy:

> But as Nietzsche, Marx, Freud, Weber, the Frankfurt thinkers, and Foucault have taught us, no intellectual orientation that seeks to illuminate *praxis*[1] in the contemporary world can be judged adequate if it fails to confront questions concerning the character, dynamics, and tactics of power and domination (1983, 156).

Praxis, as a concept that is concerned with human action, is indeed something has a solid place in practical philosophy: e.g., aesthetics, ethics, and political philosophy. Even though the concept itself is not closely examined in this thesis, I wish to point out that gaining an understanding about power and domination is not a negligible task, and as my thesis, in its own way, also offers an analysis of totalitarianism (as depicted by the abovementioned authors) in moral-epistemological terms, it contributes to shedding light upon one aspect of a particular form of political domination. For Bernstein, moving beyond objectivism and relativism (which is his main project in the book *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism)* is a practical task (ibid 175).

It has to be made clear that the analysis of relations between different moral epistemological positions does not mean tracing the moral behaviour of people back to the epistemological standpoints that are discussed; in other words, I wish to convey that moral epistemology is not seen as an explanation for individuals' behaviour, but instead, moral behaviour, as it is described by (mostly) Arendt and Bauman, and to some extent also Rorty, is analysed in terms of the epistemological positions I already mentioned above. The aim of this thesis is to engage in a close reading of the works of the authors listed above, and see how they depicted and described totalitarianism – and especially, the moral behaviour of ordinary people. During this close reading, special attention will be paid to ordinary people's answers – including

[1] *Praxis* is a concept that is brought to us by Aristotle.

those that are implicitly woven into their conduct, either acknowledged or not – to the question about the possibility and grounding of moral knowledge, and those answers will be analysed in the vocabulary that is offered by moral epistemology. A moral-epistemological analysis of the behaviour of ordinary members of totalitarian societies is endeavoured. This has to be clearly distinguished from an attempt to trace or explain the motivation of people's behaviour, which is not the aim.

By moral epistemology, the study about the possibility of moral knowledge is meant in the thesis. To clarify this sentence somewhat, let us turn to Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (2015) who has explained moral knowledge in the follwing way: "One possesses moral knowledge when, but only when, one's moral opinions are true and held justifiably." He added that is open to serious doubt if anyone actually has moral knowledge (ibid). To shed some light to the relation between objectivist/relativist distinction and knowledge, it might be of use to mention how Bernstein has written about those matters. He claimed that the basic dichotomy between the subjective and the objective relies on the idea that knowledge is a correct interpretation of what is objective, and that human reason can become completely free of bias. Bernstein wrote that this kind of understanding of knowledge which feeds the objectivist/relativist distinction, could be traced back to Cartesian Anxiety (1983, 36).

However, the word "knowledge" itself deserves some attention. It would be best to turn to the *Nicomachean Ethics* for the distinction between *episteme*, *techne*, and *phronesis*, as the distinction will be of some importance in the upcoming parts of the thesis. More precisely, I shall turn some attention to Bernstein's discussion of *phronesis*. In David Ross' translation of *Nicomachean Ethics*, *phronesis* is called practical wisdom, and explained as the knowledge of how to secure the ends of human life. Aristotle understood practical wisdom as a virtue and not an art; it is distinguished from scientific knowledge, which is demonstrative knowledge of the necessary and eternal (*episteme*) and art, the knowledge of how to make things (*techne*). Scientifically known things can be demostrated, while art and practical wisdom are concerned with different things – those that are variable (Aristotle 2009, 1140b34–35). Aristotle phrased practical wisdom in the following way: "The remaining alternative, then, is that it is a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man." (ibid 1144b–1146b)

Aristotle distinguished practical wisdom from scientific knowledge and art by pointing out that the former involves demonstration, and the latter involves necessity. Practical wisdom is first and foremost concerned with the judgment of what is to be done. Scientific knowledge entitles judgment about things that are necessary and universal (ibid 1140b31–33), and art is a state concerned with making, involving true reasoning, as he wrote (ibid 1140a20–21). There is something about practical wisdom that is especially of interest for us, namely: "Nor is practical wisdom concerned with universals only – it must also recognize the particulars; for it is practical, and practice is concerned with particulars." (ibid 1141b15–17) This point has been mentioned by Bernstein in his discussion on Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophy, and will be brought up again in the course of this thesis.

Aristotle's distinction of different kinds of knowledge lives on in the writings of many philosphers; for us, Gadamer's discussion on practical wisdom is perhaps of highest importance. The concept of practical wisdom, especially in the aspects I have brought out in the paragraphs above, exemplifies what is to be understood by moral knowledge, and hence, to some extent, it sheds light to what is meant by moral epistemology in this thesis. Aristotle's practical philosphy has been influential for Arendt's political thinking, as well as Gadamer's philosophical thought. For us, it is especially important to note that by taking Aristotle's concept of practical wisdom seriously, we can say that moral knowledge is concerned with judgment, human actions, universals and particulars. By moral epistemology, I have in mind the branch of practical philosophy that deals with questions about the possibility of such knowledge. Inside this field, we can find positions that my thesis, to some extent, also deals with – objectivism, relativism, subjectivism, (anti)foundationalism, scepticism, etc.

In this matter, I agree with Bernstein (1983, 19) in the following: to use his words, this dichotomy is helpful for making sense of many of the recent philosophical conflicts, and I would add that it is also useful for understanding how different vocabularies relate to each other with regard to the question of moral epistemology in totalitarianism.

Even though Richard Rorty, one of the philosophers whose thoughts and ideas are essential for this thesis, has dismissed the objectivist/relativist vocabulary as an unhelpful remnant from the Enlightenment, the vocabulary finds use in this thesis, as the aim is to bring different vocabularies together and set them into relation with one another. Why is this? Rorty dismissed relativism as a standpoint that nobody holds (1980, 727); however, I regard his

viewpoint as focused on merely the most extreme interpretation of relativism, which does not really allow us to trace the complex relations occuring between epistemological concepts such as relativism, objectivism, subjectivism, scepticism, foundationalism, and anti-foundationalism in the context of totalitarian societies.

As my thesis shares that claim which is also important for Bernstein's project in *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, my approach to the central focus of the thesis also dwells on some of the definitions that he has offered, especially those of relativism, subjectivism, and objectivism. It is noteworthy that his work is to a great extent concentrated on studying the connections between different thinkers, and bringing together the thoughts of those who would otherwise remain separated. This also holds for the book I mentioned above. Therefore, we can say that there is a notable similarity between Bernstein's approach and the approach used in this thesis.

While the decision to include Arendt and Bauman for an analysis of such a topic needs no elaborate commentary due to a clear congruence with regard to the main focus and the circle of interests, the same cannot be said about the inclusion of Richard Rorty. Even though he has touched the questions of totalitarianism and liberal society in his works repeatedly, they are by no means in the centre of his interest. However, his works are relevant from the viewpoint of the moral epistemological discussion that I deal with, and analyzing his ideas from the perspective of the central question of this thesis has provided the multi-sided approach that I aimed for. Rorty's idea about the necessity for a diversity of vocabularies has inspired the purpose of my thesis: namely, to bring together different vocabularies, make them relate to one another, and integrate them into the analysis of moral epistemology in approaches to totalitarian societies. This is based on the assumption that diversity of vocabularies is beneficial for understanding.

This approach provided some rather interesting results. As the vocabularies of Arendt and Rorty were brought together, for example, it became evident that by claiming that moral decisions are not guided by rules, Arendt's approach to ethical matters is already considerably closer to pragmatism and anti-foundationalism than the approaches of earlier thinkers such as Mill or Kant, regardless of Kant's strong influence on Arendt's philosophical thought.With Richard Rorty's pragmatist and anti-foundationalist approach, we face the question whether the right and wrong are dependent on the context.

To comment on my use of the terms "ethics" and "morality", it is necessary to mention that those terms have come to our current use from two different languages – Greek and Latin, although through history there have been similar notions in more than just those languages, for example Old French in 13th century *(etique, moralité).* As the predecessors of "ethics" and "morality", I would like to mention Greek *ethikos* and Latin *moralitas*. The first of them was associated with customs, the second referred to proper behavior of a person in society, literally "pertaining to manners"[2]. The difference between today's words "ethics" and "morals" is notable, while this is not obvious in the case of ethics and morality.

The distinction between ethics and morality could be presented in the following way: ethics is a normative domain and morality is a descriptive one. According to that, ethics means the search for a set of rules of conduct, and morality is associated with the individual impulses of here and now. This is the distinction attributed to Bauman and his followers.

Mihaela Kelemen and Tuomo Peltonen from Keele University have brought together two approaches to that matter – the other one besides Bauman's, in this case, is Michel Foucault's. Foucault's viewpoints are integrated into Kelemen's and Peltonen's analysis as contradictory to Bauman's disctinction. Namely, Foucault saw ethics as the ongoing construction of self without any external authority, and morality as the hidden norms of appropriate conduct (Kelemen and Peltonen, n.d., 154).

Yet another standpoint that could be seen as contradictory to Bauman's, was presented by Hans-Georg Gadamer, a 20th century continental philosopher. In *"Truth and Method",* he turned attention to the Aristotelian distinction between practical *(phronesis)* and theoretical knowledge *(logos).* In his analysis of Aristotelian ethics, Gadamer has referred to the use of words: Aristotelian virtue ethics concentrates on practice, just as the name "ethics" *(ethos)* indicates (2004, 311). Since there appears to be a lack of consensus regarding the use of those concepts, and their use is often synonymous, distinguishing between morality and ethics will not be in the focus of my thesis, and hence the use of the terms is synonymous.

The analysis of morality and of relating epistemological concerns on the level of "normal" or ordinary people and the majority of the population in totalitarian regimes has to be clearly

[2] From *Online Etymology Dictionary.*

distinguished from analysis of the aspirations of the leadership, party programme, and state policy in general (at least to a considerable extent). One of the reasons for this is evident if we think about the extent to which the general population, the masses of ordinary workers in the Third Reich as well as in Stalinist Soviet Union, were informed of the party programs and the state policy as such. I wish to point out that the level of informedness was in no way obvious. The possible gap of knowledge between the leadership and "simple officials" like, for example, Adolf Eichmann, has been illustrated by Arendt's interpretation: "Eichmann ... was free of such deplorable habits, and when he told the court that he had not known Hitler's program, he very likely spoke the truth." (Arendt 1994, 43) This being told, an issue has come to light that could be seen as a separate research question. This question, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Moreover, it is necessary to mention that solving any moral epistemological conundrums in themselves is not the purpose of this work, despite pointing out the problematic nature of many of the issues covered, including the historical application of various philosophical viewpoints.

Regardless of the fact that the thesis is first and foremost a philosophical study, its focus integrates philosophical matters with cultural, political, psychological and sociological ones. Politics, however, is something that to a great extent shapes the social sphere of our lives, which gives those topics a certain practical value, aside from the aim to understand. Since we cannot ignore the psychological elements that play a role in shaping social environments, they are also integrated into this thesis, as well as the thoughts of sociologists, such as Bauman.

3 METHOD

To offer a brief commentary about the general approach that is taken to the topics of interest in this thesis, it is first necessary to mention that the particular aspects of the method used here consist to a great extent of comparing and contrasting the thoughts and standpoints of different philosophers and theorists. Since the aim is to elucidate, and perhaps in a way also broaden the vocabulary of moral-epistemological analysis of totalitarianism, I have brought together and integrated with one another the theories of those authors whose thoughts have been particularly of interest to me due to the relation they have to the focal point of this work.

This approach is somewhat related to how Richard Rorty saw the distinction between "metaphysicians" and "ironists". By describing metaphysicians and ironists, Rorty distinguishes two opposing standpoints with regard to matter such as, e.g., common sense, final vocabulary, and truth. The following quote reveals the differences in methaphysicians' and ironists' attitude towards philosphy: "Second, [metaphysicians] take the paradigm of philosophical inquiry to be logical argument – that is spotting the inferential relationships between propositions rather than comparing and contrasting vocabularies." (Rorty 1989, 77)

There is also one point in Gadamer's approach to hermeneutic understanding that is worth mentioning to open the relation between past and present in the context of the thesis, especially since they are bound to his critique of method as such in the field of humanities. According to Gadamer, understanding means a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. Humanities (although in this paragraph, Gadamer mentions hermeutics more specifically) have been far too dominated by the idea of a procedure – a method (2004, 291). My work has been driven by the idea of bringing into presence the voices of those thinkers who have reflected on the totalitarian societies of 20th century, regardless of the fact that the aim of the work is not to compare or contrast those ideas to (reflections of) current issues in politics.

However, in order for such a comparative analysis to become possible at one point, it is first necessary to set oneself into relation with the voices of the past, and appreciate their legacy through close reading. This is done regardless of the lack of personal experience of totalitarianism, and I wish to convey the importance that today's young generation step into

conversation with history. This is especially important from the perspective of issues such as collective memory and memory politics in the society.

3.1 Reflection on sources

It has to be taken into account that many of the works handled in this thesis, have been written during and shortly after some of the most traumatic periods in 20th century Europe, a period full of tension, mourning and rapid, shocking changes. In addition to that, in my brief discussion of totalitarianism, I have mentioned Karl Popper who traces the idea of totalitarianism back to Ancient Greek, analysing the works of thinkers like Plato and Heraclitus, who both lived during periods of war and changes, as well.

However, I have no intention of using those claims as a ground for dismissing the works of the thinkers and theorists I am talking about. This is important for the reason that personal experience – and especially, learning through experience – is, according to my view, something that research in the field of humanities cannot throw aside. And in terms of personal experience, Arendt, Plato, Popper, Adorno et al. have had a considerably closer look to the issue of totalitarianism (and moral-epistemology in relation to it) than the generation of Estonians who, right after high school, attend universities today.

The choice of sources is, therefore, deliberately aimed at the works of those who had personally experienced life in totalitarian regimes. However, it is likely that those works would have been chosen even without a clear intent to ground the choice this way, as they have become the classics in the field and the topics I am dealing with.

However, Arendt has presented the viewpoint that with regard to the experience of the horror of the camps, the experiences themselves can communicate no more than nihilistic banalities (2003b, 123). Indeed, with a phenomenon such as totalitarianism, we need to keep in mind the limited nature of any kind of representations, and that the experience of the horrors in the concentration camps both in Soviet Union and in Hitler's Germany remains, forever, only with those who experienced it.

Moreover, even the mere aspiration of gaining a more theoretical understanding of the time period and its moral philosophy does not come without problems. We might turn our gaze to Gadamer's hermeneutics and his idea of the gap that always remains between us and the history, thus preventing us from progressing beyond a certain extent – or to be more precise, a

certain sort – of understanding. „The absolute identity of consciousness and object simply cannot be achieved by finite, historical consciousness.“ (Gadamer 2004, 228) Speaking of the kind of understanding that we can and should strive for in the field of humanities, Gadamer has written that understanding has to be thought of as an act of participating in an event of tradition, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated (ibid 291). Such an understanding, although a grandiose goal, is indeed kept in mind in this thesis; it is setting myself in relation with the past and the past voices of thinkers that I intend to do.

4 TOTALITARIANISM

The term "totalitarianism" was allegedly coined in 1926 in reference to Italian fascism. In English, the word "totalitarianism" is formed of the Italian "totalitario" – "complete, absolute" (Harper 2001). One of the most well-known tractates about the concept is, without a doubt, Hannah Arendt's *"The Origins of Totalitarianism"* (1951). Her approach to the concept has also become the focal point of heated debates and discussons regarding totalitarianism.

Totalitarianism presumes and means total domination as a political phenomenon. Such a total domination, according to Arendt, assumes interchangeabilty of people and their superfluousness. In addition to that, Arendt makes a chilling claim about the aim of camps in totalitarian societies: namely, that the camps serve the purpose of eliminating, under scientifically controlled conditions, spontaneity as human behavior, and transforming the human personality into a mere thing (Arendt 2003b, 119).

Her (ibid 120) concept of totalitarianism is closely linked to the phenomenon of camps – labour, concentration, and extermination camps – and her approach insists on seeing totalitarianism as a new phenomenon. The element of camps inside the notion of totalitarianism is seen by her as something new and unprecedented, and it denies all comprehensible comparisons. "Therefore all parallels create confusion and distract attention from what is essential. Forced labor in prisons and penal colonies, banishment, slavery, all seem for a moment to offer helpful comparisons, but on closer examination lead nowhere." (ibid 125)

Among noteworthy reflections on Arendt's approach to totalitarianism, it is necessary to mention Slavoj Žižek. Žižek has voiced criticism against Arendt's understanding of totalitarianism. He has seen a problem in handling the Holocaust as the Void, a black hole and a mystery which defies knowledge and description (2001, 65–66). Indeed, we can find that in Arendt's statements about survivors' reports about concentration camps, among other things (Arendt 2003b, 120):

> On the contrary, anyone speaking or writing about concentration camps is still regarded as suspect; and if the speaker has resolutely returned to the world of the living, he himself is often assailed by doubts with regard to his own truthfulness, as though he had mistaken a nightmare for reality.

This, however, is not a general characterizing trait of the whole of Arendt's approach to the topics of the Final Solution, totalitarianism, concentration camps, etc. We can distinguish between the descriptions of personal experiences gained in the camps and her analysis of the machinery of the Final Solution as a bureaucratic and political phenomenon, which, although unprecented to her view, could not be described as a mystery on the basis of Arendt's works. However, relating Žižek's critique and Arendt's works properly would demand a more thorough analysis.

According to Arendt, some of the characteristics and aspirations of totalitarian regimes are not apparent at first glance (e.g., making certain groups of people disappear), due to the complexity of those political arrangements. This holds both for the German and the Russian system (ibid 124). She also described the three essential steps necessary for acquiring total domination. Among those, we can find destroying the juridical, moral, and the individual person in man (Arendt 2003b).

Opinions have differed with regard to the (lack of) novelty that the political phenomenon of totalitarianism entitles. Austrian-British philosopher Karl Popper, best known as a philosopher of science, has traced the roots of totalitarianism already back to Plato's writing in Ancient Greece (Popper 1947, I:75–76, 79). Popper found many totalitarian characteristics in Plato's philosophical ideas: Plato's approach to justice, censorship, monopoly of the ruling class with regard to virtues and training, and continual propaganda aimed at unifying minds (ibid I:75). The open society, as distinguished from the closed or totalitarian society, is one in which individuals are confronted with personal decisions, and its members compete for social status among themselves (ibid I:153)

Writing about Plato's approach to the concept of justice, Popper pointed out that Plato was most probably aware of the fact that his approach differed considerably from the common understanding of justice. Popper then proceeded to claim that Plato replaced the mainstream understanding with his own.

Here, we could make a reference to Arendt's discussion of totalitarianism, in which a clear parallel with Popper's critique of Plato's use of the concept of justice can be seen. It is evident that both Arendt and Popper saw replacing the values and, as Popper put it, faith of a society with new, conflicting ones as a totalitarian tendency:

> It was as though morality, at the very moment of its total collapse within an old and highly civilized nation, stood revealed in the original meaning of the word, as a set of mores, of customs and manners, which could be exchanged for another set with no more trouble than it would take to change the table manners of a whole people (2003a, 43).

Popper has described the relation between totalitarianism and morality in the following way: totalitarianism, according to him, is not simply amoral; it is the morality of the group or the tribe, which makes it not individual, but collective selfishness (1947, I:95).

Adorno and Horkheimer traced the roots of totalitarianism back to the Enlightenment. Bringing out the Enlightenment's affinity for rationality, they pointed out how anything that does not conform to the rules of computation and utility is suspect from the viewpoint of Enlightenment mentality:

> Whatever myths the resistance may appeal to, by virtue of the very fact that they become arguments in the process of opposition, they acknowledge the principle of dissolvent rationality for which they reproach the Enlightenment. Enlightenment is totalitarian (1997, 6).

In addition, Arendt's emphasis on spontaneity could be seen as somewhat related to Adorno and Horkheimer's idea about mimesis and acting: "Only acting, not mimesis, can detract from suffering." (ibid 182)

Regardless of the differing opinions with regard to the novelty of totalitarianism as a political phenomenon, Arendt, Popper, and Adorno agree that totalitarianism entails a form of government which aims at the total control of society. In my thesis, I distinguish between the government and society, as it is mainly the moral conduct of the ordinary people that form the centre point of my interest. The reason for that choice is, first and foremost, that it is not obvious how informed ordinary people of totalitarian societies were with the exact mission and political program of the government.

I rely to a great extent on Arendt's understanding of totalitarianism, because I agree with her reasoning with regard to the concept of totalitarianism, and the key ideas of the totality, novelty, and relation with the camps, as well as with several other crucial elements that she highlights, including her thoughts about human spontaneity, routinizing of violence, and the moral collapse. I find her analysis of the elements and origins of totalitarianism thought-provoking, regardless of the elusive nature of the experiences she describes in her discussion of the concentration and extermination camps. The focus of Arendt's work on totalitarianism is also useful from the perspective of my analysis, as, like Tony Judt (2008) has pointed out,

Arendt's concept of totalitarianism focused on the psychological and moral features of the phenomenon.

The relation between the totality of the political phenomenon of totalitarianism and the extent to which it violates human rights has been brought in the following quote: "For the truth of the matter is, there existed not a single organization, or public institution in Germany, at least during the war years, that did not become involves in criminal actions and transactions." (Arendt 1994, 159)

I also find Arendt's idea of the comparability of Stalinist Soviet Union and the Third Reich useful. Even though Arendt's focus was mostly on the German system, she also bore in mind the early Soviet Union in her discussion of totalitarianism, which is also the case with this work. A considerable amount of my thesis deals with the example of Adolf Eichmann, whose trial in Jerusalem I handle as useful material for analysing the moral-epistemological relations that occur in totalitarian societies.

With regard to discussing totalitarianism, I am thinking mostly of Stalinist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. However, I have to admit that there is a certain disbalance in this regard, and my examples together with a considerable part of analysis are derived from the ideas of those thinkers who, first and foremost, had experience and/or interest for the Third Reich. The choice of social theorists and philosophers whose works are studied more closely in this work has dictated the historical events that are in the focus of attention.

A solid definition of totalitarianism or a more detailed comparison of the Stalinist Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany are out of the scope of my work. An analysis of both of those regimes would also demand turning attention to a myriad of complex issues relating to them, such as their background, structure, concrete historical examples that could be associated with totalitarian traits, mentality, everyday life, and collective memory. For example, Alexandr Etkind and others have pointed out the huge difference in how Stalinism and Nazism are remembered, which is something that cannot be forgotten in a strong analysis of the application of the term "totalitarianism" to the regimes mentioned (Etkind 2013).

5 THE CONCEPT OF MORALITY

Under the terms “morality” and “ethics”, we most commonly understand branches of philosophy that are concerned with proper human conduct – with right and wrong. However, the “right” and “wrong” themselves are by no means obvious in their meaning, nor do they indicate how one should come to their meaning. Below, the content of some of the most influential schools of thought in ethics, as well as the ideas of some separate thinkers, are outlined. Special attention is being paid to the grounding of morality and the origins of principles, laws, or sense of ethics. The aim is to trace some of the most influential ways of understanding the question of morality, and also to clarify what is meant by “morality” and “ethics” in this particular work.

Immanuel Kant, an immensely influential German philosopher, could be considered a very important predecessor of both Arendt’s and Bauman’s thinking. Kant also has a place in Rorty’s discussion of ethics and epistemology, but Rorty’s philosophy is rather opposed to Kant’s ideas. The questions asked by Kant coincide in many respects with those asked by Arendt; indeed, we can say that the influence of Kant’s philosophy in Arendt’s political thought is evident. Both were interested in the relation between morality and the nature of a human being, moral duty.

We could bring out the application of rational faculty in making moral decisions as something that, again, joins Kant’s and Arendt’s thinking in a very essential way. To put it generally, Kant claimed that morality serves as a law for us inasmuch as we are rational beings (1981, 50). Similarly, Arendt emphasized the bond between thinking and morality: the kind of thinking that Arendt discussed should be ascribed to all people, as it is necessary for our moral behavior (1971, 25).

Both Arendt and Kant also asked about the role of free will in making moral decisions. This is clear in Kant’s discussion of morally good and morally evil: in order for the use or abuse of human being’s power of choice with respect to moral law to be imputed to him, the deed under question must be a deed of freedom (2005, 46). The lack of freedom is a burning issue in Arendt’s discussion about situations in which an individual has no more a choice between good and evil. In her discussion on totalitarian terror, she talked about the moral person being cut off from the individualist escape and the decisions of conscience being made absolutely

questionable and equivocal: the alternative, in some situations, is no longer between good and evil, but between murder and murder. It is clear that for Arendt, conscience was a keyword in the notion of morality as such. The problematic nature of totalitarian society manifested itself, among other things, also in the creation of conditions under which conscience ceases to be adequate and to do good becomes utterly impossible, as she put it (2003b, 133).

Regarding one's propensity for good or evil deeds, Kant's standpoint was formulated thus: "We can further add that the will's capacity or incapacity arising from this natural propensity to adopt or not to adopt the moral law in its maxims can be called *the good or evil heart*." and "But the moral law is itself an incentive in the judgment of reason, and whoever makes it his maxim is *morally* good." (2005, 49) Kant was a foundationalist in the sense that his ideas of good and evil are deeply rooted in the nature of a human being. The concept of the moral law within is evident in the second quote I brought out above, and similarly, we can see that according to Kant, the root of evil lies in our free will.

Inside the epistemology of morality, we find two directions of thought: empiricist and rationalist. They are also evident in Kant's moral philosophy. As Kant pointed out, the first kind are based on either physical or moral feeling, while the second kind are based upon either the rational concept of perfection as a possible effect of our will or else upon the concept of an independent perfection as a determining cause of our will. Kant preferred rational faculty as suitable for grounding principles of morality, as a sense of morality, according to him, is not suitable for grounding moral judgments. He also pointed out that there must be a distinction between a world of sense and a world of understanding, but did not deny the importance of the faculty of senses for the faculty of reason (1981, 46–47, 52).

As the influence of Aristotle for the development of ethical thought is undeniable, let us turn to his well-known work, "Nicomachean Ethics". Arisotle had also a very strong influence for J.S. Mill, among others. Giving an overview of Aristotle's ethics is not an aim; however, the ideas that relate to the discussion and the thoughts of the philosophers at hand will be highlighted here.

We should note that for Aristotle, morality was strictly a quality of actions. It has been claimed that for him, ethics is the inquiry into the human good (Aristotle 2009, x). He described human actions as those which have an end; by that, he laid emphasis on intent in

deeming something moral. “Happiness, then, is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end of action.” (ibid l. 1097b20–21) Happiness played an important role in Aristotle’s ethics, as he claimed it is the chief good, that at which all actions are aimed. His argumentation was linked to rationality: according to him, it is rational to make one’s own happiness the end to be aimed at.

Inside the tradition of moral philosophy, binary thinking is prevalent. Namely, the distinction between internalism and externalism distinguishes two polarized philosophical positions. Externalist ethics insists that the sanctions to follow ethical principles do not stem from “inside” the person, while in internalist ethics, the opposite holds. John Stuart Mill, a 19th century English philosopher and a well-known proponent of utilitarianism, has put the theory of moral sense together with moral rationalism and methodologically dismissed them. Mill was also an Aristotelian philosopher, with his reasoning relying to a considerable extent on Aristotle’s vocabulary and ideas. Mill’s externalist views were clearly voiced in *Utilitarianism*.

Mill has written about how our sentiments are trained and cultivated, which means that during years, the way in which people feel about things, changes. Mill was talking about the process of socialisation. However, the example of totalitarian societies together with many philosophical discussions on the phenomenon demonstrates that “cultivation of sentiments” occurs also in a different way and on a different scale. Namely, we could also consider the routinisation of violence a “cultivation of sentiments”.

Mill was in search of principles – and indeed, firm principles of morality might take us away from the shifting grounds that at first glance do not allow for a justification of preferring liberalism to totalitarianism. According to Mill’s utilitarianism, moral decisions are made on the basis of criterion. The criteorion is the good, which, then, becomes the measure of right and wrong. Mill went on to develop the principle of utility, which states that happiness, and only happiness, is intrinsically good. The utilitarian creed claims that actions are right to the extent that they increase happiness and wrong to the extent that they decrease happiness (Mill 1906, 9).

Let us now turn to Bauman’s discussion on morality and related questions. It is of help to consider his approach to the biblical phrase “Love thy neighbor as yourself!”. In opening this

phrase, Bauman asked what it means to love oneself, and presented a connection between loving oneself and the hope of being loved, more specifically – he claimed self-love is built of the love offered to us by others. Others must love us first, so that we can start to love ourselves. This led him to saying that being loved by others makes one feel important and unique. Loving one's neighbor, then, makes it possible for them to love themselves, too, and feel similarly unique and important. By this, Bauman presents the necessity of embracing difference, uniqueness, and diversity. To be precise, his reasoning led him to conclude that loving our neighbors would mean respecting their uniqueness (2008, 35).

In his representation of Emmanuel Levinas' ideas, Bauman highlighted the thought that the subject is called into being through assuming responsibility for the other – speaking of indomitable, uncompromising alterity. The self is born in its recognition of being for the Other. Bauman integrated Levinas' vocabulary with that of Kant's, speaking of Levinas' ideas in the light of the Kantian phrase of "moral law inside me", pointing out that from the viewpoint of the moral law within, the face of every Other is the face of an individual (ibid 41–42).

With regard to Bauman's approach to morality, the question whether moral initiation, upbringing, and education we receive within the moral party of two prepare us for life in the world occupies an important position. The question stems from Bauman's interest for the different burden of responsibility that one carries for the "Other as such" and the Other as the face. The former is an anonymous, indefinite entity. Turning to Levinas' and Knud Logstrup's ideas, Bauman implied the connection between society and ethics as follows: society is an arrangement for rendering the otherwise stubbornly and harrowingly silent ethical command audible – the ethical command, then, becomes specific and codified. Society, according to this way of thinking, reduces the infinite multitude of options to a manageable range of obligations. Bauman described this approach as one that ascribes to society the task to cut down suprahuman boundlessness of responsibility to the capacity of an ordinary human's sensitivity and judgment (ibid 44–45). However, Bauman also pointed out how morality, in the sense of being-for-the-other, can be incapacitated in society when being for the other becomes being for oneself. He was, then, supporting Levinas' idea that society may be a stratagem for making a self-centred, self-referential, egoistic life attainable for inborn moral beings (ibid 54–55).

From the viewpoint of the discussion of this thesis it is essential to highlight the following claim that Bauman made (ibid 63): uncertainty is the ground of the moral person and the only soil in which morality can flourish. This statement carries an interesting message from the perspective of moral epistemology, as we could associate uncertainty with a lack of firm foundations, which is highly compatible with Rorty's approach, and also scepticism, which, according to Peter D. Klein, is one of the most crucial issues in epistemology (Klein 2015). The importance of scepticism (with regard to morality) was highlighted by Arendt in "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship".

In totalitarian societies, the argument of morality was used as a strong one by Hitler and Stalin. Moral justification was deemed highly important. For example, immorality appears in Hitler's writing as a dark tone which serves the purpose of giving the presented picture a gloomy tint. While describing an undesirable social arrangement with the help of the example of an overcrowded cellar, he has written the following: "When at the age of fourteen the young man is discharged from school, it is hard to decide which is stronger in him: his incredible stupidity... or the corrosive insolence of his behavior, combined with an immorality, even at this age, which would make your hair stand on end."[3]

For Arendt, morality was a concept that is closely linked to conscience, empathy, and personal responsibility. Arendt did not see the new set of values in the Third Reich as moral maxims: "Since the whole of respectable society had in one way or another succumbed to Hitler, the moral maxims which determine social behavior and the religious commandments – "Thou shalt not kill!" – which guide conscience had virtually vanished." (Arendt 1994, 295) By that, she has referred to how, in Hitler's Germany, the ruling values no more served the purpose of determining social behavior in accordance with conscience. Totalitarianism brought about a total moral collapse (2003a, 24–25). For her, morality is about telling right from wrong, and therefore involves judgment instead of any fixed framework for "calculating" a moral decision: "Those few who were still able to tell right from wrong went really only by their own judgments, and they did so freely ... they had to decide each instance as it arose, because no rules existed for the unprecedented." (Arendt 1994, 295)

[3] Hitler, A. „Mein Kampf" (1924), p. 27 at http://www.angelfire.com/folk/bigbaldbob88/MeinKampf.pdf

By claiming that moral decisions are not guided by rules, Arendt's approach to ethical matters, as already mentioned before, is already quite close to anti-foundationalism. With Richard Rorty's pragmatist and anti-foundationalist approach, we face the question whether right and wrong are dependent on the context.

To turn to Rorty's understanding of morality, it is relevant to emphasise the importance of the concept of solidarity for him, as an increase of solidarity is connected to what Rorty calls moral progress.

> But that solidarity is not thought of as a recognition of a core self, the human essence, in all human beings. Rather, it is thought of as the ability to see more and more traditional differences (of tribe, religion, custom, and the like) as unimportant when compared with similarities with respect to pain and humiliation – the ability to think of people wildly different from ourselves as included in the range of 'us' (1989, 192).

Here, again, we have to turn to the ironist, as Rorty's claim that literary criticism does for ironists what the search of universal moral principles is supposed to do for metaphysicians, suggests that by moral progress, Rorty does not have in mind a firmer grounding of universal moral principles.

6 THE BANALITY OF EVIL

The importance of thinking with regard to moral conduct is well illustrated by the thoughts and ideas of Hannah Arendt, a 20th century German-born political theorist. Having watched and reported the trial of SS-lieutenant colonel Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem 1961, she developed the concept of the banality of evil. The banality of evil could be understood as Arendt's response to the question how, in the context of the Holocaust, hair-raising crimes could be committed on a large scale, involving an impressive number of perpetrators and finding support by the actions of very many people. In search for the answer, Arendt highlighted the role of empathic thinking in moral behaviour, and questioned the understanding, prevalent in modern legal systems, that intent to do wrong is necessary to commit a crime (1994, 277).

She also brought out many other aspects which explained the phenomenon of collaborative, eager workers in the complex bureacratic system that worked on the Final Solution. Eichmann, according to Arendt's report, was one of the examples of such enthusiastic workers who functioned as "cogs" in a massive machinery. The core of banality of evil has been well summarized in the following: "The trouble with Eichmann was exactly that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal." and "He *merely*, to put the matter colloquially, *never realized what he was doing*." She referred to the horror associated with such a new type of criminals, who commit their crimes under circumstances that make it impossible for them to realize that they are doing wrong (ibid 276, 287). Arendt sought the roots of Eichmann's behaviour in his thoughtlessness, as clearly distinguished from stupidity, and remoteness from reality (ibid 288).

The relevance of the concept of banality of evil for understanding the moral-epistemological relations that are considered to appear in totalitarianism comes to light when we consider the following aspects of the banality of evil. Namely, the banality of evil entitles a phenomenon, in the core of which resides the defiance of "word and thought" as Arendt has pointed out when speaking of Eichmann's last words before execution: "It was as though in those last minutes he was summing up the lesson that this long course in human wickedness had taught us – the lesson of the fearsome, word-and-thought-defying banality of evil." (ibid 252). So, we could conclude that the banality of evil is characterized by an inability to conduct one's

thinking with regard to things that do not directly concern the subject, i.e. a certain selfish inclination which narrows the view. To understand what this claim means from a moral-epistemological point of view, it is useful to consider the nature – the kind of – thinking that Arendt has in mind.

Namely, it is evident that for Arendt, the inability to think was related to an eager embracing of a new set of rules (1971, 7). The kind of thinking that Arendt probably had in mind could join in itself both objectivist and subjectivist principles, as the importance of that kind of thinking lies in reflection as such generally, regardless of whether it is based on the experiences and beliefs of the individual or the reality of the outside world. This is supported by a reference that Arendt makes to Kant (ibid 16):

> Second, if Kant is right and the faculty of thought has a "natural aversion" against accepting its own results as "solid axioms", then we cannot expect any moral propositions or commandments, no final code of conduct, from the thinking activity, least of all a new and now allegedly final definition of what is good and what is evil.

Arendt referred to medieval philosophy, in which such thinking was called meditation. This kind of pondering reflection, she wrote, does not produce definitions, is distinguished from deliberation, and in this sense, is entirely without results (ibid 21). It is, however, necessary from the viewpoint of morality, as there appears to be a twofold paralysis of thought: interruption of all other activities, and planting doubt after coming out of it. Such a "wind of thought" does not favour applying general rules of conduct to particular cases (ibid 25). Therefore we can say that Arendt presented thinking as an anti-universalist practice, and a practice which should be ascribed to all people, as it is related to making moral decisions.

However, it is not only this kind of thinking that possesses great importance for making moral decisions; Arendt has also described an act of thinking which does serve the purpose of producing a clear answer to a concrete question. She used this kind of thinking to explain why certain people, under the new order of totalitarianism, remained non-participants. Namely, the key is that they asked themselves to what extent they would be capable of living in peace with themselves after having committed a certain deed, and also preferred to die when they were forced to participate. Arendt considered a silent dialogue with oneself (which, as she pointed out, we usually call thinking since Socrates and Plato) to be the precondition for this kind of judging (2003a, 44–45)

Arendt's contribution helps us understand the functioning of human conscience, and the background and guiding forces of behaviour of "normal", ordinary people in totalitarian societies. However, combining Arendt's thoughts and findings with those of American social psychologist Stanley Milgram provides an especially rich vocabulary for understanding moral behaviour under circumstances such as totalitarianism, and among other bits of knowledge, this joint vocabulary also sheds light to the complex moral-epistemological relations that appear in the patterns of behaviour, with special focus on individual, subjective thinking.

Among other ideas that link Arendt's and Milgram's reasoning, the difference between crimes of commission and crimes of ommission is well illustrated by Milgram's experiments. In Arendt's reflections about Eichmann's trial and, more specifically, Eichmann's role in the Final Solution, we can find the following: Arendt dismissed the claims that Eichmann was just a "tiny cog" in the machinery of Final Solution as legally unimportant, since all the "cogs" are in the court transformed back into perpetrators, namely, human beings (1994, 289). The results of Milgram's series of experiments demonstrated a heightened willingness of letting cruel things happen to people in the presence of more than one perpetrator. This could be seen as the shifting of responsibility to others, a process that could, and often does, result in a lack of the feeling of responsibility. It comes out especially clearly in a video called *Obedience*, shot by Milgram. For many subjects, responsibility was a concern, and after experimenter had given the confirmation that all responsibility is his, a considerable amount of subjects continued (Milgram, n.d.).

With regard to the distinction between crimes of commission and crimes of omission, an introductory linking element has to be mentioned between Arendt's and Milgram's studies. With regard to the distinction between crimes of commission and crimes of omission, we should note that the very same obedience-encouraging distance between the perpetrators/supporters and the victims that Milgram experimented with, was there in the case of concentration camps both in the Russian as well as in the German system. As Arendt writes, "...slaves were not, like concentration-camp inmates, withdrawn from the sight and hence the protection of their fellow-men ... " (2003b, 125) So, here I brought out a part of Arendt's writing that makes the following claim: being withdrawn from the sight of fellow-men means being withdrawn from their protection. On the basis of this standpoint, it would be logical to assume that crimes of omission are strongly fuelled by phenomena such as

concentration camps – people support violent regimes with the "help" of "dehumanizing effect of buffers", to use Milgram's vocabulary. Arendt has mentioned the "skillfully manufactured unreality" of those whom the barbed wire of camps fences in (ibid 126). We could see it as one thing that produces the effect mentioned by Milgram, especially since Arendt herself pointed out that due to such unreality relating to the camps, the human masses treated the latter as if they did not exist any more. Emphasizing the unreality that relates to the Holocaust was also the target of Slavoj Žižek's criticism.

From Arendt's train of thought, one can find a complement for Milgram's observation of responsibility in such cases. That particular complement deals with the relevance of distance (between the perpetrator and the victim) from the perspective of actual responsibility. Namely, Arendt claimed that since crimes such as the Holocaust were committed en masse (both in terms of the number of victims and perpetrators), the distance or proximity of the victims and perpetrators is meaningless as far as the measure of responsibility is concerned.

"On the contrary, in general the degree of responsibility increases as we draw further away from the man who uses the fatal instrument with his own hands." (Arendt 1994, 246–247) In this, however, we can notice a clear difference with Milgram's approach: namely, Arendt was against the tendency of modern psychology, sociology, and bureaucracy, to explain away the responsibility of the doer for his deed in terms of some sort of determinism (ibid 290). This is evident in the link that Arendt ties between obedience and politics. Obedience, for her, (ibid 279) was not free of moral obligation. "For politics is not like the nursery; in politics obedience and support are the same."

6.1 The banality of evil in the light of Stanley Milgram's social experiments

Arendt's conclusions and the concept of banality of evil shall be viewed in the light of a series of experiments, which were conducted by Milgram in Yale University in 1961 in order to find out how far a person will proceed in a concrete and measurable situation in which he is ordered to inflict pain on a protesting victim.

There is a notable conflict in the philosophies of these two scholars. After having conducted the experiments, Milgram concluded that one's moral beliefs and ability to state their values has little, if anything, to do with their actual behavior under the pressure of circumstances (2009, 6). Arendt writes in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: "The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of someone else." (2003b, 324) Here Arendt is referring to the lack of empathy in Eichmann and the relation between word, thought and action. The kind of thought that Arendt was talking about, we have already discussed above.

However, the baffling results of experiments of obedience were interpreted by the conductor of the experiment in a following way: empathy comes into play only when the individual is in an autonomous state, e.g. he or she has not gone through the agentic shift that takes place when people confront a legitimate authority. By agentic shift, Milgram meant the effect that people started feeling pride or shame depending on how well they had performed the mission assigned to them, instead of judging the act's moral quality (2009, 9). Therefore it is apparent that for Milgram, moral beliefs or empathy as such is limited and does not guide one's actions in the agentic state.

The experiments were organized in the following way: two people come to a psychology laboratory to take part in a study of memory and learning. One of them is designated as a "teacher" and the other a "learner". The experimenter explains that the study is concerned with the effects of punishment on learning and the learner is told to learn a list of word pairs; whenever he makes an error, he will receive electric shocks of increasing intensity (ibid 4). The real focus of the experiment is the "teacher", who is the naive subject of the study. At various points in the experiment the subject would turn to the experimenter for advice

whether he should continue. The experimenter would respond with a sequence of sentences. If the subject refuses to obey after "prod" 4, the experiment is terminated.

The different variations of the basic experiment provide us with an insight of the importance of the conditions which either support the strength of the binding factors or, on the contrary, weaken the effect of the factors that bind the individual to the state of obeying another person without questioning the actions' morality, even if the action conflicts with one's personal beliefs. The tendency to bind the individuals' behavior to the values and principles of an institution (simultaneously deeming the subject's personal, differing beliefs an unimportant) has been described as totalitarian by some scholars – a point that will be more closely examined later in the thesis.

First of all, Milgram experimented with the proximity of the victim. The aim of these variations was to find out whether, if the victim were rendered increasingly more salient to the subject, the obedience would diminish (ibid 34). Indeed, the results showed that the closer the victim and his sufferings were brought to the subject, the more subjects disobeyed. However, it appeared that hearing the victim's cries does not significantly alter the subjects' performance: if in the remote feedback condition, 26 of 40 subjects administered a maximum shock, then in the voice-feedback condition the number of obedient subjects was 25.

Regardless of the small difference between the results of the first two experiments, it became apparent that the closeness of the victim has a strong influence on the number of people who are willing to give the victim a maximum shock. In the third experiment, where the victim was placed in the same room as the subject, he was visible as well as audible. In this experiment, the number of obedient subjects was considerably lower (ibid 35). In the fourth experiment the victim received a shock only when his hand rested on a shock plate. After having administered a shock of 150 volts, the subject had to force the victim's hand on the plate, as the victim refused to continue and demanded to be let free. The subject confronted the victim's refusal to go on from one side and the experimenter's order to continue from the other. In this experiment, 16 of 40 subjects continued to the end of the experiment.

These results would suggest that several factors related to the subject's closeness might be at work. One of the factors that Milgram considered important among others, were empathic cues. Lack of visual and physical contact with the victim gives the victim's suffering an

abstract, remote quality for the subject (ibid 36). Here a parallel can be drawn between the performance of the obedient subjects in the first two experiments and the behavior of many bureaucrats in Germany during the National Socialism regime. Eichmann did not have to face the victims whom he sent to their deaths, he did not have to execute them personally. That might have been the reason why he was aware, but only in a conceptual sense, of the sufferings he caused. When considering the resolutions of strain, e.g. the factors which help put aside the discomfort of committing actions which conflict with one's conscience, Milgram pointed to avoidance as one of the most primitive mechanisms for the resolution of strain, bringing the example into which Eichmann and other bureaucrats of the Nazi regime as well as other totalitarian regimes fit perfectly: "We are left with the impression of the little clerk, busily shuffling papers, scarcely cognizant of events around him." (ibid 158)

Experienced unity of act also played a role – this is a physical separation of the act and its effects. Again, a parallel can be seen: Adolf Eichmann dealt with the documentation and organizing work which was hardly different than any other usual office job, and as the result of his actions, somewhere far away, people were transported to camps where they would be exterminated. A bureaucrat like Eichmann could easily distance himself from his work and its consequences, as there was a clear physical separation. Although he had seen the reality of concentration camps, it was not a part of his everyday work.

Eichmann valued his Jewish acquaintants and friends – he saw those who were close to him, not those who were distant; again, an obvious parallel can be drawn to the obedience experiment. Obedience was higher if the contact with the victim was weaker – the closer the victim, the lower the level of obedience. Milgram stated it is possible that this is caused by the fact that people in the same room develop a feeling of intimacy and alliance – which was also true in Eichmann's case, as he valued his friends, but never spared a thought to those he did not know. In *"Eichmann in Jerusalem"*, Arendt quoted Eichmann: "It was a great inner joy to me that I could at least see the man with whom I had worked for so many long years, and that we could speak with each other." (2003b, 324) Eichmann had previously received a telegram from Rudolf Höss, Commandant of Auschwitz, telling him that *Kommerzialrat* Storfer, one of the representatives of the Jewish community, had arrived and had urgently requested to see Eichmann. Eichmann had considered his relationship with the man important enough to go

and see him, which shows that he somewhat valued those whom he knew and had positive encounters with, even if they were Jews.

Milgram also analysed the effect of the closeness of the authority. In the seventh experiment, the experimenter gave the initial instructions and left, consequently giving his orders by telephone. As a result, obedience dropped sharply (Milgram 2009, 60). In this case, only 9 subjects out of 40 obeyed the experimenter to the end. The physical absence of the authority changed the subjects' behavior drastically – although continuing to administer shocks, many "teachers" gave lower shocks than were required and never informed the experimenter of their actions. Instead, some of them even assured the experimenter that they were properly raising the shock level according to instruction. That shows a necessity for a clear hierarchical system where the powerfulness of the social mechanisms is achieved by having each subordinate element serve as a superordinate to elements in a level below. So, in order for the subordinate to obey properly and continuously and to bind them to the agentic state, an authority or a superordinate of some sort must be present or close – which explains the number of people occupied in the bureaucratic systems of totalitarian regimes.

Another interesting experiment Milgram organized was the variation where the subject was free to choose the shock level. This variation was conducted in order to find out whether the command is really the effective cause of the subject's action. Milgram considered the possibility that the previous results revealed the fact that the experiment provided an institutional justification for the release of aggressive impulses in human beings. The results proved it wrong. Namely, mainly lower shocks were administered – the average was the level of 3,6, which meant a shock between 45 and 60 volts: on the shock generator, there was a designation of "slight shock" indicating to the group of four switches starting with 15 and ending with 60 volts.

For Stanley Milgram, the differences in the results of the experiments conducted in slightly different conditions, referred to the fact that human behavior depends solely on the conditions in which he or she has to act:

> The design of such an automaton, if it is to parallel human function, must be sufficiently flexible to allow for two modes of operation: the self-directed (or autonomous mode), when it is functioning on its own, and for the satisfaction of its own internal needs, and the systemic mode, when the automaton is integrated into a larger organizational structure. Its behavior will depend on which of the two states it is in (ibid 132).

Both during Eichmann's career as well as in the case of the agentic shift that appeared with many of the subjects of Milgram's experiments, we can observe a shift of focus and concern from the well-being of human beings to the well-being of the system, at least formally. The latter manifests itself in the heightened carefullness with which tasks are fulfilled, both by an official on his post, or the subjects of the "memory experiments". Speaking of emigration centres for Jews in Vienna and Prague, Arendt has quoted Eichmann: "'In the beginning, I was not too happy to leave Vienna, for if you have installed such an office and if you see everything running smoothly and in good order, you don't like to give it up.'" (1994, 66)

When viewing Arendt's philosophy in the light of Milgram's experiments, it is possible to conclude that the phenomenon of banality of evil is actually one's inability to prevent the shift to the agentic state when confronting authority. Banality of evil, as Arendt views it, is the lack of demonic evil in the one who commits evil. Instead, it is the emergence of a wish for personal advantage and an extremely self-centered and short-sighted view of life. Here a similarity can be seen, as Milgram also noticed that in order to commit evil, one need not have any hostile feelings for the victim, but in the end it comes down to the conditions and the characteristics of a certain social situation in which the subject has to perform. As he discovered in one of the variations of the experiment, all of the 40 subjects studied preferred to administer slight shocks instead of strong ones.

This, however, is not comparable to the events that occurred in Germany during the National Socialist regime; with the addition of ideology, devaluating the victim and extensive anti-Semitic propaganda combined with the attributes of a totalitarian hierarchical system, brought out clearly by Milgram, formed a society where redefining the meaning of the situation and a loss of responsibility were nothing uncommon. This is what Arendt called the moral collapse – ordinary people were able to commit unimaginable atrocities.

The difference between the two scholars' views lies in the fact that for Milgram, the shift cannot be prevented personally with the help of one's free choice. He stated that from a subjective standpoint, a person is in a state of agency when he defines himself in a social situation in a manner that renders him open to regulation by a person of higher status. In this condition the individual no longer views himself as an instrument for carrying out the wishes of others. In *Obedience to Authority* (2009, 134), he writes: "An element of free choice determines whether the person defines himself in this way or not, but given the presence of

certain critical releasers, the propensity to do so is exceedingly strong, and the shift is not freely reversible." That makes it possible to conclude that in Milgram's view, free will is limited and is available only in some certain social situations. Some critical releasers can make the shift not freely reversible.

Arendt's view differed from that of Milgram's in that sense. She based her conclusion on concrete historical persons and events when she pointed out that there were still people whose ability to tell right from wrong had remained intact, and they never suffered a "crisis of conscience". Arendt referred to a numerous group of workers and Socialist intellectuals who tried to aid the Jews they knew (2003b, 338). Arendt also mentioned the German students who distributed leaflets in which they called Hitler a mass murderer (referring to the story of the Scholl siblings). This cost them their lives – on February 22, 1943 they were found guilty of calling for the sabotage of the war effort and armaments and for the overthrow of the National Socialist way of life; of propagating defeatist ideas, and defaming the Führer, thereby giving aid to the enemy of the Reich and weakening the armed security of nation (Scholl 1983, 114–118).

The banality of evil in Eichmann's case was especially well demonstrated by his selective memory: according to Arendt, he remembered the turning points in his own career rather well, but they did not necessarily coincide with the turning points in history (2003b, 327–328). He represented utter ignorance of everything that was not directly, technically and bureaucratically, connected with his job, Arendt reported. After having watched Eichmann defend himself in the court, she concluded that this man was not a "monster" but rather a clown (ibid 328). It seems that ideology was also of great importance and influence for Eichmann. A nation-based world-view in combination with careerism and remote contact with the consequences of his actions created utter ignorance towards the fate of people who did not belong to some certain privileged groups in his mind: this is evident in his strongly emphasized distinction between the treatment of German Jews and non-German Jews (ibid 331).

Moreover, in my opinion Eichmann's enthusiasm offered further proof of the extent to which he was influenced by propaganda and ideology. His enthusiasm appeared in his eagerness to come up with ideas which would strip Jews of any legal rights. From *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (ibid 321):

> At one end you put in a Jew who still has some property, a factory, or a shop, or a bank account, and he goes through the building from counter to counter, from office to office, and comes out at the other end without any money, without any rights, with only a passport on which it says: 'You must leave country within a fortnight. Otherwise you will go to a concentration camp.'

Even though the social situation determines the actions of a majority of people, as Milgram's studies showed, there nonetheless exists something that Milgram never brought up: namely, the fact that in absolutely every experiment and in every variation, there was someone who disobeyed. Even in situations which made it difficult for the subjects to grasp the real extent of the victim's sufferings, there were people who, at one point or another, refused to go into conflict with their inner morals and regardless of every aggravating and binding factor, gathered their strength and overcame the social influences that the authority had on them, refusing to go on.

Despite the differences that are clear between the setting of the experiments and an actual totalitarian society, this is something Arendt also stressed by referring to the people who had taken the risk and valued their personal moral convictions more than everything else in the world. Those who never suffered "a crisis of conscience", in other words, those whose behavior was the exact opposite of Eichmann's for example, did not get any benefits from it; on the contrary, they risked being forfeited of the rights of a citizen by the society and more than that, even being liquidated – and that is exactly what happened in many cases.

The examples of some people in history has shown us that whatever the social conditions, there is something that stands higher in every social influence and can keep the person's ability to tell right from wrong intact. The philosophies of Arendt and Rorty would suggest terms such as empathy or solidarity, that of Baumans suggests the phrase "being for the Other". There are numerous examples of people who have saved potential victims of the Holocaust, in addition to the people mentioned by Arendt.

The most known of those who assisted Jews during the Nazi regime, are probably Miep Gies and her husband Jan Gies, Dutch citizens who hid Anne Frank, her family and many other Jews in their attic. Together with a group of three others she smuggled in food at the factory for the Franks and other Jewish family (Roberts 2010). Dutch businessman Jan Zwartendijk aided Jewish refugees by issuing permits for them to enter Curaçao, a Dutch colonial possession in the West Indies, thus helping refugees flee from Lithuania. For his efforts he was posthumously honored, in 1997, as a "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem,

the Israeli Holocaust Remembrance Authority (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum 2014).

Another example of that kind could be seen as a confirmation of the conclusions of Nechama Tec's sociological study of the 'rescuers' during the Holocaust, which Bauman also referred to – a study of people who helped and hid Jews whenever they could. Bauman cited Nechama Tec in an attempt to illustrate that the question under focus should be: what does the Holocaust have to say about the field of sociology? For that, he used Nechama Tec's conclusion that it is not possible to pinpoint any particular social group or class that could be associated with rescuing and helping. Instead, her conclusion was that such people came from different fields and different "corners of the social structure". An example that supports this conclusion is the story of the German Army Captain Wilm Adalbert Hosenfeld. Hosenfeld helped to hide and rescue several Polish people, including Jews. Among others, he also helped Polish pianist Władysław Szpilman survive in hiding.

Therefore it is possible to conclude that free choice remains, even in a violent political regime. However, one should keep in mind that for a majority of people, social situations still determine their actions and behavior, as they are unable to prevent the agentic shift. There is a clear tendency for banality of evil in the society; Milgram's experiments proved that the extent of the phenomenon mentioned by Hannah Arendt is far greater than anyone could ever have assumed; the banality of evil is bafflingly widespread. Still, next to that bothering and troublesome fact, hope remains – this hope is fed by numerous examples from the past as well as present, when extraordinary strength and empathy is encountered in human behavior.

I consider it important to keep in mind what Milgram has stated: "Nothing is more dangerous to human survival than malevolent authority combined with the dehumanizing effects of buffers." (2009, 157) Indeed, the trials of Nazi perpetrators often brought the issue of obedience and authority to light, and Eichmann's trial was in this regard no exception. Namely, Eichmann blamed his guilt on obedience. Arendt, describing Eichmann's own conviction, has written: "His guilt came from obedience, and obedience is praised as a virtue." He claimed to be a victim, as his obedience was abused by the Nazi leaders (Arendt 1994, 278–279).

The same fact I mentioned, has also been brought out before; that not all of Milgram's subjects shocked their victims with the highest voltage. Those who resist in such circumstances have apparently managed to retain the framework of personal causation and responsibility that we ordinarily use in daily life. This was pointed out by Peter Karsten in his analysis of Lieutenant William L. Calley's trial (Karsten 1986, 430).

It is possible to conclude that the role of empathy and moral beliefs in one's actions is actually dependent on the person. For the majority, it is rather the social situation that they have to face which determines their behavior – the presence of a legitimate authority, the closeness of the victim, the position and the status of the people around them. It has to be taken into account and always kept in mind. For some, on the other hand, the influence of the situation and the social conditions are not so strong – in this case, we can say that they do not shift into the agentic state, but, as Arendt wrote, their ability to tell right from wrong remains intact. Sadly, this is the minority, but this minority adds a spark of hope into an otherwise quite gloomy overall picture of the human nature.

From a moral-epistemological point of view, it is essential to turn back to the focus of Milgram's study. Namely, the aim of the series of experiments was to uncover the extent to which, under different circumstances, subjects would obey another person (an authority) without questioning the morality of those actions, even if they conflicted with the personal beliefs of the subject.

The high number of obedient subjects (i.e., subjects who finished the experiment or continued with it to a considerable extent) suggests a high willingness to abandon personal beliefs in the presence and under the influence of authority. From Milgram's descriptions of the experiments it is clear that conflict with personal beliefs did occur on numerous occasions, and subjects underwent severe distress in the process of obeying the authority. Protests and requests to abort the experiment were rather common. A parallel is evident - this phenomenon could be observed also in the case of totalitarian societies, in which moral values (that did not coincide with those of the state) were relegated to the realm of subjectivity, which mostly served the purpose of a disempowering act.

Arendt emphasized the importance of thinking, and more specifically, empathetic thinking (although she used different words – "thinking from the viewpoint of others"). I suggest the

assumption that the importance of this kind of empathetic thinking goes hand in hand with a respect for one's personal beliefs and values. This assumption is based on the seeing the feeling of empathy, and thinking from the viewpoint of someone else, as something quite uncommon in the case of Third Reich as well as in Stalinist Soviet Union, exactly for the reason that both in the Third Reich as well as Stalinist USSR, a different set of values was established and brought to practice, and different sentiments (than empathy) were recognized as welcome and virtuous.

7 ETHICAL OBJECTIVISM

According to Bernstein, objectivism refers to a claim that there exists (or should exist) a certain permanent, non-historical matrix or framework to which we can turn in order to understand the essence of notions such as rationality, knowledge, truth, reality, the good and the right. "Objectivism is closely linked with foundationalism and the search for an Archimedean point," (Bernstein 1983, 8) It entitles the following standpoint: if philosophy, knowledge or language could not be strictly grounded, radical superstition coud not be avoided.

In my discussion about objectivism in the context of totalitarianism, some fine distinctions have to be taken into account. Namely, the following subchapters seek for relations between ethical objectivism (even if they are indirect) and totalitarianism. This is not to say that objectivism (and the same holds for the other epistemological positions that I consider in some detail in the thesis, subjectivism and relativism), in its complete form, specifically characterizes totalitarianism. Instead, the aim is to find whether and which aspects or consequences of taking an objectivist position with regard to morality can be found in approaches to totalitarianism.

Let us now take a look at the concepts of rationality, objective knowledge, and foundationalism, and especially their relations to the issues at hand. Bernstein, while listing the salient claims of Cartesianism that have entered mainstream philosophy, shed light on the notion of rationalism: "There may be many sources for our coming to know something, but the court of appeal to validate claims to knowledge is reason – a reason which is universal, not limited by historical contingencies, and shared by all rational beings." (ibid 117) Bernstein implied that the problematic kind of reason – the one that goes hand in hand with the dark side of Enlightenment – is instrumental reason (ibid 189).

Instrumental reason is about adopting suitable means for one's ends, and indeed, we can find some explanation for Bernstein's claim, which implicitly refers to a conflict with morality, if we consider the following: "It seems possible that acting morally on some occasion might not be a suitable means to an agent's ends. If so, then according to this thesis, it would not be irrational for her to refuse to act morally on such an occasion." (Kolodny and Brunero 2013)

Instrumental reason, then, does not seem compatible with Aristotle's emphasis on practical wisdom. As already mentioned earlier in this thesis, we can distinguish between three different forms of knowledge in Aristotle's philosophy: *phronesis*, *episteme*, and *techne.* Each of them has already been briefly described. I would now like to take a closer look at one of the aspects of *phronesis*, and make a reference to Bernstein. Namely, Bernstein refers to Gadamer's claim that the nature of *phronesis* (as involving the mediation between the universal and the particular) denies a simple "application" of fixed determinate laws to particular situations, and the example of a judge is brought (1983, 148).

According to that, we can find a conflict between acting in accordance with fixed set(s) of rules, and *phronesis*. Furthermore, Bernstein has highlighted this conflict even more explicitly in his critical discussion of Gadamer's hermeneutics: he pointed out that Gadamer, in his analysis of Aristotle's distinction between *phronesis* and *techne*, noted that a variant of *phronesis*, called *synesis*, requires friendship and solidarity, which sounds highly incompatible with the fixed sets of rules that totalitarianism presented in the field of morality. In Gadamer's discussion, *phronesis* is brought together with the kind of dialogue and conversation that assumes mutual respect, as well as recognition and understanding. Bernstein's analysis of Gadamer's philosophical project (in *Truth and Method*) served the purpose of moving beyond objectivism and relativism, a distinction that Bernstein sees as stemming from the Cartesian anxiety (ibid 165). An interesting claim made by Aristotle is that practical wisdom – *phronesis* – is variable, i.e. it could be otherwise. In the presence of a non-historical framework which we could consult in pursuit of the essence of knowledge, for example, admitting moral claims to be variable could be seen as somewhat problematic.

7.1 Ethical objectivism in the context of totalitarianism

The relation between totalitarianism and ethical objectivism is by no way obvious. As we shall see in the upcoming sections of the thesis, totalitarianism has been depicted as a political arrangement in which all has to be in accordance with the aspirations of the ruling party and the state policy. At the first glance, it looks like totalitarianism could then be most succesfully analyzed in terms of relativism and subjectivism. However, taking Bernstein's (although quite broad) definiton of objectivism seriously brings about the question if the interests of the superior race or ruling class could have been seen as constituting a framework that was to be considered permanent, either justified or not. A more detailed analysis of connections between objectivism, foundationalism, and dogmatism, though, is beyond the scope of my thesis.

The connection between the epistemological position of objectivism and totalitarianism could also be opened by the totalitarian pretension for a certain moral foundation and justification in political purposes and agenda. This is not to claim that objectivism is compatible with totalitarian aspirations, but instead, it is one particular link being elucidated between some aspects of objectivism (namely, its connection to foundationalism, and a reluctance to admit the shifting grounds – theoretical frameworks, conceptual schemes – that argumentation is based on), and totalitarianism. I want to take a closer look at the problem of a fixed set of values in the context of totalitarianism.

The analysis of this relation benefits considerably from the use of the notions of foundationalism and rationalism. I would also like to take a look at a point that was presented by Bernstein: the modern understanding of rationality is in close connection with the view that knowledge must be objective, and values belong to the subjective private sphere. This is very similar to Bauman's description of a standpoint that is common to totalitarianism: the neutralization of personal convictions that foregrounds the interests stemming from ideology and state policy.

7.1.1 The pretension for a firm foundation and universality

To give a brief glance beyond the conduct of the general population – as distinguished from the leadership – of totalitarian societies, let us consider some of the thoughts voiced by the leadership, as well. In his book *Mein Kampf*, Adolf Hitler has written about the NSDAP: „All

the persecutions of the movement and its individual leaders, all vilifications and slanders, were powerless to harm [the party]. The correctness of its ideas, the purity of its will, its supporters' spirit of self-sacrifice, have caused it to issue from all repressions stronger than ever." (1924, 496)

Emphasizing moral justification and strong necessity of the state actions was also present in Stalin turning to the ideals of Pan-Slavism, e.g., in 1945 at the Congress of Pan-Slavism in Sofia, where he stated that announcing Russian the official language and overall language of commmunication is not just an international political necessity, but also a moral one. Without even considering the point whether Hitler's and Stalin's claims were actually grounded in reality or not, we can still detect that such aspirations that are exemplified in this paragraph – an emphasis on *correctness* of the ideas of the NSDAP, for example – indicate in themselves a claim for a strong basis of some sort. It is simple to notice that by pointing that out, I am not saying that a democratic society would deem such claims objectivist.

The example of Stalin's claims about Russian language is an example used by Hannah Arendt, in order to show that Nazism and Bolshevism relied on Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism (1979, 222). It might be useful to recall how Arendt saw the relation between pan-movements and individuals together with the individual reality in totalitarianism: the universality of pan-movements justifies the demand to annul all the objections of individual conscience; the difference between means and end evaporates. The superiority of the universal and the general brings with it an act of legitimization and quieting the conscience. By general and universal we could here understand some permanent, non-historical framework, which justifies actions that (might) conflict the conscience of a person.

The support of non-historical framework goes somewhat hand in hand with the totalitarian love towards calculability. This conclusion has been made as a result of a closer reading of Hannah Arendt's (2003b, 137) understanding of total domination, and examining the relation between spontaneity, neutrality, calculability, and total domination:

> Any neutrality, indeed any spontaneously given friendship, is from the standpoint of totalitarian domination just as dangerous as open hostility, precisely because spontaneity as such, with its incalculability, is the greatest of all obstacles to total domination over man.

The issue of objectivity and subjectivity, as seen by the perpetrators of the Holocaust, for example, is evident in Arendt's writing (1994, 69): "This "objective" attitude – talking about

concentration camps in terms of "administration" and about extermination camps in terms of "economy" – was typical of the S.S. mentality, and something Eichmann, at the trial, was still proud of." Thus, "objectivity", according to Arendt, distinguished S.S. from the "emotional types", as S.S. saw it. Therefore, we can conclude that with regard to some of the most violent deeds done to fellow human beings, the perpetrators of those deeds saw objectivity as superior to emotionality.

The relevance of what was considered "objective" in totalitarian societies from the perspective of morality becomes perhaps somewhat clearer if we consider how Dr. Servatius, Eichmann's defense attorney, presented collection of skeletons, sterilizations, and killings by gas – namely, he named them "medical matters" (ibid 69). Calling something that in normal circumstances is most probably very problematic for one's conscience (i.e., killing by gas) a medical matter, could be seen as diminishing the moral problematicity of the killings.

Arendt characterized Eichmann, both generally and with regard to some particular cases, as immune against reason and thinking beyond himself. Here, I would like to explore the relations between that kind of reason that Arendt was talking about, thinking, and objectivity.

7.1.2 Ethical objectivism and standards of morality

In Arendt's political thinking, additional thoughts could be found which are relevant from the viewpoint of an epistemological analysis of the moral philosophy of totalitarian states. One of those which I would like to discuss in some detail revolves around the issue of moral standards in totalitarianism.

In her essay "Personal Responsibility Under Dictatorship" (2003a, 44), Arendt has shown the problem that arises in the context of a totalitarian regime with regard to a unified and consistent, intellectually and rationally grounded set of values. She pointed to how the members of respectable society yielded to the new order, which in her view could be considered a proof that their consciences were functioning in an almost automatic way. One system of values was exchanged for another. Exchanging one set of values for another was also to a large extent the content of "banality of evil" as a concept (1971, 7).

The non-participants, however, did not base their actions on a set of learned or innate rules, which would be applied to particular cases that arise, so that every new experience or situation is already prejudged beforehand. Instead, the decisive element for acting on a deed was a conversation with oneself, and thinking – namely, asking and answering the question, to what extent they would still be able to live in peace with themselves after having committed certain deeds (Arendt 2003a, 44). So it is evident that the kind of thinking that Arendt is referring to, is not technical by its nature, nor is it even concerned with theoretical problems.

Here we can observe another facet of moral-epistemological relations in totalitarianism. Fixed sets of moral values and standards could refer to the immanence of morality and entitle a certain pretension for rationality. Since moral objectivism assumes a firm certainty and theoretical basis (as the theoretical unity and assumed correctness of moral standards contributes to creating a fixed set of values), we can say that Arendt's thought sheds light on yet another facet of objectivism in totalitarian societies. This particular aspect of the relations discussed helps us better understand the issues accompanying objectivist and foundationalist views in totalitarianism. Furthermore, it is also useful to consider that aforementioned aspect when analysing relations between objectivist and subjectivist standpoints.

In his discussion on Cartesian legacy, Bernstein has linked the idea of a set of rules with foundations in the following way: "Fifth, once we discover the Archimedean point that can

serve as a foundation, then we can build a solid edifice of knowledge by following strict rules and Method." (1983, 117) This was written in the context of bringing out the most salient features of Cartesianism that have played an important role in later philosophy. It could be seen as a purely epistemological claim, which in itself has nothing to do with totalitarianism, but in the light of the analysis of epistemological features and characteristics of totalitarianism, it helps us see the connection between fixed sets of rules (may they be rules of obtaining knowledge, or rules of conduct) and a search for foundation, which is the essence of foundationalism.

8 THE HOLOCAUST, MODERNITY, AND NEUTRALIZATION OF PERSONAL CONVICTIONS

The links between the Holocaust, modernity, and totalitarianism, have been analysed by Bauman. His thoughts about liquid modernity and the Holocaust as a modern phenomenon offer interesting material for analysing the moral epistemological relations that we can find in his writings. He has turned attention to the processes and conditions which made the Holocaust possible – and among those, we can find neutralization of personal (ethical) convictions, discipline ideal, and an emphasis on mission in totalitarian societies.

Bauman sees the Holocaust as a dark side of modernity. The Holocaust, he writes, would be inconceivable outside the frame of modern society. With regard to the connection between modern society and the Holocaust, Bauman brings out the conditions that are essential for both: industrial technology, bureaucracy, a strict hierarchy of command and discipline, the ambition to subordinate social reality to a rationally designed model of order, and the neutralization of personal (and ethical) convictions. Bauman phrased relation between the Holocaust and totalitarianism thus: "Modernity made the Holocaust possible, whereas it was the totalitarian rule (that is, a total and absolute sovereignity) that implemented the possibility (2008, 84–85). The last condition mentioned by Bauman is particularly interesting from the perspective of analysing moral epistemology in totalitarianism, and therefore it will be discussed in more detail in upcoming chapters of the thesis.

Bauman's approach to social issues is driven by an endeavour to create a conceptual framework that would enable us to understand and read messages that have hitherto been hidden, illegible, or susceptible to misunderstanding. In this phrasing of Bauman's aims, we can sense both a foundationalist, in Rorty's words, a metaphysician endeavour, as this framework is supposed to make possible the reading of a hidden message. On the other hand, we can sense some elements of an ironist[4] approach, as Bauman admits that it is an attempt to "catch the shape of a world on the move" (ibid 2)

[4]An ironist, in Rorty's vocabulary, is someone who admits the contengency of social matters and power of redescription. Both of the terms brought out here will be discussed in more detail in the course of the thesis.

Further similarities between *Bauman's project in Does Ethics Have a Chance in A World of Consumers?*, and Rorty's pragmatist views, are apparent. This is clear in their approach to the relation between ways of thinking and social improvement: both of them admit that, to use Bauman's vocabulary, improvements in our thinking about the lived world will not suffice to ensure the fulfilment of the hope to improve the world and our lives in it. Bauman, however, sees those improvements as essentially important from the viewpoint of hope (Rorty 1989, 94; Bauman 2008, 2).

For Bauman, "liquid" modernity is described by fuzzy and eminently permeable borderlines, unstoppable devaluation of spatial distances and the defensive capability of territories and the intense flow of human traffic across all and any frontiers. Liquid modernity favours change for the sake of changing. As Bauman writes, liquid modern social sphere is also characterized by a fuzziness of the line that separates inside from the outside (ibid 8–9). This is a trait that Rorty associated with moral progress – a broadening sense of "us" that includes more and more of those who are different from us (1989, 192). Bringing together Bauman's and Rorty's vocabularies and thoughts would then give us the conclusion that modernity, and especially its liquid quality, allows for a moral progress that entails an increasing solidarity with those who seem different from us. However, in an upcoming chapter of the thesis, a closer look will be taken at Rorty's views about solidarity.

A constant change could be seen as an assumption essential for pragmatism, and it is also a central element in Bauman's concept of liquid modernity. Rorty defined pragmatism as the doctrine that there are no constraints on inquiry save conversational ones (1980, 726). Conversations, however, are prone to change, and they could, in a way, be considered fluid. In liquid modernity, social totalities are in constant flux, and are seldom meant to last for the duration. Both contingency and fluidity deny loyalty to bases and foundations: for example, Rorty calls the contingency of language the fact that there is no way to step outside the various vocabularies we have employed and find a metavocabulary which somehow takes account of all possible ways of judging and feeling (1989, xvi).

According to Bauman, we are torn between freedom and security, and this is reflected in the concept of socialization. Socialization is a complex and unstable product of the on-going interplay between yearning for individual freedom of self-creation and the equally strong desire for security. Such security can be offered only by the stamp of social approval – by

this, Bauman seems to indicate that only a community of reference can offer such security. Freedom tends to come in package with insecurity, while security tends to be packed together with constraints on freedom (2008, 13, 19). It is evident that for Rorty, pragmatism entails a promise of freedom, as it gives a say to many diverse vocabularies without determining any criteria for preferring them to each other, and ironism aims for greater openness, more room for self-creation. Bringing Bauman's claim together with Rorty's, we can see that they agree on that point – especially since Rorty does not refute the claim that ironism is susceptible of the common suspicion that it does not offer strong means for empowering liberalism. Rorty confirmed that, indeed, the ironists' fight against the forces that are marshaled against her/him is determined by the weapons and luck that the ironist possesses (1989, 91).

To turn back to the question of morality, it is useful to note that Bauman's idea of 'being-for-the-other' is related to a thought presented by Adorno and Horkheimer in their discussion of Anti-Semitism (1997, 183). As we recall, Bauman's approach to morality rests to a great extent on the ideas of Levinas, and more specifically, on the idea of being for the other, a certain responsibility for others. Adorno and Horkheimer described the totalitarian hostility towards "otherness":

> The victims are the false counterparts of the dread mimesis. They reproduce the insatiability of the power which they fear. Everything must be used and all must obey. The mere existence of the other is a provocation. Every "other" person who "doesn't know his place" must be forced back within his proper confines – those of unrestricted terror.

There are also interesting links between Bauman's and Arendt's thinking, and their reflections on totalitarianism. "You told your story in terms of a hard-luck story, and, knowing the circumstances, we are, up to a point, willing to grant you that under more favourable circumstances it is highly unlikely that you would ever have come before us or before any other criminal court." (Arendt 1994, 278–279) Bauman claimed that the Holocaust entitled a phenomenon that could be seen as a window to modernity – as something that reveals the hidden possibilities of modernity, those which would, under favourable circumstances, perhaps never come to light (1989, 7, 13). This quote of Arendt's sheds light to how Zygmunt Bauman's metaphor about the Holocaust as a window to the darker side of modernity does not only include the state apparatus and the machinery of the Third Reich, but instead stretches also to the individuals who lived and worked in accordance with the aims of the Final Solution and who, by simple participation, supported it.

Bauman's ideas could be seen as relevant for understanding the place that ethical subjectivist claims had in totalitarianism. Therefore, the following chapter focuses on ethical subjectivism and joins Bauman's thoughts into the analysis of ethical subjectivism in the context of totalitarianism.

9 ETHICAL SUBJECTIVISM

There are various possible ways of interpreting and applying subjectivism. Here, the aim is to take a "mundane" approach to subjectivism, and define it in quite simple terms. According to Bernstein's understanding of such a definition, subjectivism is a term that calls attention to whatever is "merely" a matter of personal opinion, taste, or bias. Bernstein considers it necessary to make a clear distinction between subjectivism and relativism, as a relativist is not necessarily a subjectivist and vice versa (1983, 11). The difference between subjectivist and relativist claims comes to light when we consider that Bernstein describes relativist claims as follows: there can be no higher appeal than to a given conceptual scheme, language game, set of social practices, or historical epoch (ibid 11). So, relativism refers to how our claims depend on factors that do not stem from our experiences or consciousness more generally.

9.1 Ethical subjectivism in the context of totalitarianism

A glance into the history of ideas brings to light the problems relating to moral subjectivism, and a closer analysis of their nature could be based on the example offered by totalitarian societies. Zygmunt Bauman (1989, 10) has referred to Weber's theories, in which theologian Richard R. Rubinstein saw an explanation to the fact that the Holocaust happened – there are no mechanisms in the explanations of modern bureaucracy, rational spirit, in the principle of efficiency, scientific mentality and relegating values to the sphere of subjectivity, which would exclude the Nazi excess (or even enable the use of the word "excess"). "For example, 'no horror perpetrated by the German medical profession or German technocrats was inconsistent with the view that values are inherently subjective and that science is intrinsically instrumental and value-free.'",Rubinstein in Bauman (ibid 10).

From the perspective of the analysis of moral-epistemological problematics in totalitarianism, those just quoted thoughts that were brought out and further developed by Bauman, could be understood as follows. If the values of morality are subjective, it means they lack a basis outside that particular subject's personal experiences and interpretations. It further follows that moral value is not an intrinsic trait of any deed, but depends instead on something external to the deed. Here, a certain similarity with ethical relativism could be noticed, but it should be pointed out, that in case of moral subjectivism, moral judgment is strictly about personal interpretation.

9.1.1 Mission, ideology and utopia in totalitarian societies

It is useful to consider the importance of mission, ideology, and the utopian nature of totalitarian societies to understand what relegation of values to the realm of subjectivity means in this context. This side of totalitarianism that Bauman turned our attention to will now be linked with Arendt's approach to similar questions, and Kant's moral philosophy.

To start, we should take a look at how Arendt portrayed the aspirations of totalitarianism: totalitarianism strives not toward despotic rule over men, but toward a system in which men are superfluous. The destruction of spontaneity served the end of total power (2003b, 137). Indeed, even a superficial acquaintance with Nazi or Stalinist ideologies confirms that achieving total power could be considered a part of mission and the political aspirations which outrule the voice of an individual.

The vocabulary used by Arendt – especially „serving the end of something" – invites one to tie that thought with another problematic point, namely, that Eichmann justified his acts and decisions in the Third Reich with the claim that they were guided by his understanding of Kantian ethics. To quote Eichmann as Arendt did, „I meant by my remark about Kant that the principle of my will must always be such that it can become the principle of general laws. " Arendt considered it outrageous, as Kantian philosophy is closely tied to man's faculty of judgment (Arendt 1994, 136).

In addition to that, I would like to point out another way in which Eichmann's interpretation of Kantian ethics must have been flawed. In Eichmann's statement, as Arendt also implied, there is an implicit emphasis on the importance of the deeds he committed from the perspective of the system (with its mission). The mission of the totalitarian state, with its aspirations that theorists such as Frederic Rouvillois would call utopian, is the end and the deeds which we now consider crimes against humanity could be seen as a means to achieving this end. In the focal point here is the combination of the categorical imperative, quoted by Eichmann, and Kant's emphasis on the importance of considering the man an end in himself. To give the exact quote, in its fine detail and precision: „Now I say that a man, and in general every rational being, exists as an end in himself and not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will. He must in all his actions, whether directed to himself or to other rational beings, always be regarded at the same time as an end." (Kant 1981, 30) By referring to those important points in Kantian ethics, I wish to bring forth the incompatibility between

the totalitarian emphasis on a bigger, supra-individual political mission and Kant's moral philosophy.

The role of seeing one's behaviour in a larger context which justifies one's actions was highlighted also by Milgram's experiments. The argument of being part of a mission – „The experiment requires that you continue"– often functioned as a binding factor which bound the subject to the orders of the authority. In this particular case, the mission related to the pursuit of scientific truth, whereas in the case of totalitarian societies, the mission was political. Milgram showed how human agent faded from the picture, and „the experiment" acquired an impersonal momentum of its own (2009, 9). This viewpoint is strikingly similar with Bauman's ideas: it is compatible with relegation of values to the realm of subjectivity and a totalitarian discipline ideal.

To shed some light to the possibility of seeing totalitarian states as necessarily possessing utopian elements, it would be useful to take a look at the ideas of a man whose name was already mentioned above – Rouvillois. He is a French author and a professor of public law, who has also written about the history of ideas. According to Rouvillois' approach, all totalitarian states are first and foremost utopias. In the beginning of his argumentation, he brought out the mainstream definition of utopia which sees it as an appealing but impossible ideal. Among alternative definitions, he mentioned the one which deems utopia "a plan of an imaginary government in which all things are perfectly ordered for the common good". Rouvillois sees the similarity in their "Promethean project to make a tabula rasa of the past to install the reign of the new self." (2000, 1–2)

To compare Rouvillois' thoughts with those of Arendt, we may start off by pointing out the parallels: for example, as a first thing it is necessary to mention Rouvillois' (ibid 4) portrayal of the utopian attitude for an individual's body. According to him, utopias have a strong tendency for reiterating that the citizen's body belongs to the collective. It is compatible with Arendt's emphasis on the totality and total control that is exercised in totalitarian societies (2003a, 33).

However, Arendt's understanding of the concept of utopia appears to be different from that of Rouvillois'. Her choice of phrasing, apparent only in passing, deems totalitarianism as non-utopian: „If we take totalitarian aspirations seriously and refuse to be misled by the common-

sense assertion that they are utopian and unrealizable, it develops that the society of the dying established in the camps is the only form of society in which it is possible to dominate man entirely.“ (Arendt 2003b, 136)

In *Does Ethics Have a Chance in a World of Consumers?*, Bauman also turned some attention to the notion of utopia, and more specifically, social utopia. Utopia, for him, is represented as the model of “good society”, and the idea of utopia accompanied the birth of the modern era. The pursuit of happiness is carried forward by a search for a good society. A social utopia demanded the seat of public authority to never be empty (2008, 28). The utopian search for a “good society” is well compatible with Bauman’s emphasis on the aspect of mission with regard to totalitarianism. He claimed that for the perpetrators of the Holocaust, justification of their deeds dwelled on solidarity and loyalty to the communal cause (ibid 108).

Utopia and totalitarianism both share a similar concept of human being, nature, and history. Both utopia and totalitarianism see a human being as a rational impelling force and main agent (Rouvillois 2000, 16). Therefore, taking into account the tendency of totalitarian states to, at least publicly, create political utopias and emphasize a mission that is greater than the individual (which could, for example, be observed in Stalin’s speech on November 7, 1941, where he claims that the people is carrying a great mission of liberation, or in “My Struggle” where Hitler described his hometown as a symbol of a great mission), it is possible to assume that in such a case, moral values would not be in the position of becoming the basis of making the decision of perpetrating a deed or not perpetrating it. Additionally, to turn back to ideas pointed out by Bauman, if science is understood as essentially instrumental and value-free (as the medical atrocities would suggest), it could be applied for committing such deeds which are necessary from the perspective of political agenda and/or conflict the conscience.

9.1.2 Ethical subjectivism and the ideal of discipline

From this perspective, we could see that if deporting people to distant places and/or to labour, prison or extermination camps is efficient and rational to achieve a certain utopia (or some end particularly desired by the government), the suppression of personal interests and a separate identity is acknowledged as a virtue, as Bauman has pointed out: “In organizational ideology, readiness for such an extreme kind of self-sacrifice is articulated as a indeed, as the moral virtue destined to put paid to all other moral demands. The selfless observance of that

moral virtue is then represented, in Weber's famous words, as the honour of the civil servant." (1989, 21–22)

Here the role of a discipline ideal could be observed, which refers to an identifying oneself with the organization in an absolute manner. In a totalitarian state, in which the government holds the ultimate authority over a society, this means suppressing one's former identity and interests – i.e., the identity and the interests that do not coincide with those of the state (ibid 21).

It should be mentioned that relegating the values into the sphere of subjectivity is not to be understood as an act that gives moral values a certain officially fixed position or importance; the position given to moral values on the state level, quite logically, depends on how compatible the particular values are with the ideology of the current regime. Analysing the statement about "relegation of values to the sphere of subjectivity" in combination with the ideal of the individual sacrificing a personal identity, then, could offer some ground for the following reasoning: a certain shift takes place, namely – determining the moral value of a deed becomes dependent upon how the deed is interpreted from the perspective of (the interests of) the organization in terms of its morality; this derives from the self-identification with organization, since organization becomes the new basis of anything subjective.

A contradiction is evident that cannot be overlooked; namely, such an interpretation of the points brought out by Bauman leads us to wondering how to reconcile the idea of moral values being relegated to the realm of subjectivity, and the thought of praise and honour that was ascribed to those who acted in accordance with their subjective sphere, which had internalized the values of the organization. Here, we are led to the question what is meant by moral values in the first case. This is a question that touches the issue of conscience: in Kantian terms, we are here talking about the moral law within the individual. Kant claimed that in us, a moral law is present, and due to free will, we are capable of deviating from it, and acting in accordance with other maxims. "In view of what has been said above, the statement, "The human being is *evil*," cannot mean anything else than that he is conscious of the moral law and yet has incorporated into his maxims the (occasional) deviation from it." (Kant 2005, 55)

The role that moral subjectivism plays in the discipline ideal is well brought out by Hannah Arendt's (1979, 249) thought about pan-movements, which she considers very important for both Nazism and Bolshevism:

> It is this absoluteness of movements which more than anything else separates them from party structures and their partiality, and serves to justify their claim to overrule all objections of individual conscience. The particular reality of the individual person appears against the background of a spurious reality of the general and universal, shrinks into a negligible quantity or is submerged in the stream of dynamic movement of the universal itself. In this stream the difference between ends and means evaporates together with the personality, and the result is the monstrous immorality of ideological politics.

Here I would like to use the approaches of both Bauman and Arendt to explain the following. Namely, if moral values are recognized as part of an individual's separate reality, therefore reduced into a relatively unimportant factor, or (to consider Bauman's argumentation) if they are joined into the dynamic movement of a universal (by handling as a moral virtue the identification of oneself with the organization and suppressing the interests which conflict with those of the organization), it could be concluded that morality as such does not possess a value of its own.

9.1.3 Ethical subjectivism and the relation between the idealist figure and discipline

Reporting about her interpretation of Eichmann's reasoning, Arendt referred to the high appreciation of idea and mission, used as a justification for deeds committed against the Jews during the Third Reich. She also reported that the reason, according to Eichmann, why he became so fascinated with the Jewish question, was his own "idealism". Namely, the Zionists were like him, "idealists". (Arendt 1994, 41) „The perfect „idealist", like everybody else, had of course, his personal feelings and emotions, but he would never permit them to interfere with his actions if they came into conflict with his "idea"." (Arendt 2003b, 218) Idealism also became a criterion for categorizing the Jews, in Eichmann's view, which is why he reportedly respected Zionists more than Orthodox Jews or assimilationists.

Continuing with the same case, we can find further proof to the claims that have previously been made: during investigation, Eichmann also admitted that he would have sent his own father to death, had it been ordered; according to Arendt's interpretation, Eichmann did not only want to show to what extent he was under orders, but also what an "idealist" he had been (Arendt 1994, 41). To bring forth a link with the importance of a great mission, it is useful to

take a look at Bauman's explanation of the Holocaust. Bauman wrote that approximately 6 million Jews and by some accounts close to a million Gypsies, many thousands of homosexuals and mentally disabled persons were executed, because they did not fit the order about to be built. By drawing attention to that, Bauman highlighted the power of the (new) order. We could understand the fulfilment and realisation of that order as mission. That the victims were those who were deemed unfit in the order, is something that forms the central point of Bauman's term "categorical murders" – in those cases, people were exterminated for having been assigned to a certain category (2008, 86–87).

Altogether, the brought examples from Eichmann's trial provide us with an insight to the role of idealism in relegating values to the realm of subjectivity and neutralization of personal convictions. Bauman, however, pointed out to which extent the readiness to sacrifice personal beliefs is considered a moral virtue in totalitarianism. Tying those two ideas together sets idea as the basic frame on which is placed any subject's self-identification with the state, and in the borders of which functions also the discipline ideal in a totalitarian regime. So it is possible to claim that discipline and the relegation of values, in a certain light, serve idealism.

10 PRAGMATISM, IRONISM, AND SOLIDARITY

Rorty's viewpoints are distanced from objectivist and universalist claims, as well as foundationalism. "A universalistic ethics seems incompatible with ironism, simply because it is hard to imagine stating such an ethic without some doctrine about the nature of man." (1989, 88)

In his thinking, we find such keywords as pragmatism and ironism. Pragmatism could be understood as his philosophical approach to questions of truth and justification, while the concept of ironism dwells on the portrayal of its central figure, the ironist. An ironist, in Rorty's vocabulary, is a person who is aware of the power of redescription, and denies the importance of criteria for choosing final vocabularies (ibid 89).

Rorty defines an "ironist" as someone who fills 3 conditions: having radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary[5] she currently uses (because she has been impressed by other vocabularies), realizing the argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve those doubts, and not thinking that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself (insofar as she philosophizes about her situation) (ibid 73).

Rorty's definition of pragmatism focuses on what philosophy has to say about knowledge and truth. According to him, pragmatism is the claim that philosophy will have no more to offer than common sense about knowledge and truth. To be pragmatist means to refuse to attempt the sort of explanation which uses notions such as "acquaintance with meanings" and "acquaintance with sensory appearances" to explain the reliability of reports about the environment (1979, 176). According to Bernstein's interpretation, Rorty's pragmatism entitles a defence of the Socratic virtues: "willingness to talk, to listen to other people, to weigh the consequences of our actions upon other people." (Bernstein 1983, 198) To reflect on the connection between pragmatism and ironism, it is possible to claim that an ironist is someone who necessarily possesses a pragmatist mindset, since for an ironist, there is nothing beyond vocabularies that serves as a criterion of choice between vocabularies (1989, 80). Rorty

[5] According to Rorty, a final vocabulary is a set of words which a person employs to justify his/her actions, their beliefs, and their lives (1989, 73).

distinguished that kind of thinking clearly from a "metaphysician's" thinking which believes that there is a right redescription that can make us free. Discovery is a keyword for metaphysician, as the metaphysician aims to uncover the nature of things (such as truth and personhood, for example). His goal, Rorty wrote, is to carry the culture as a whole closer to an accurate representation of reality, and "the right" does not merely mean "suitable for those who speak as we do", but it has the sense of grasping the real essence (ibid 76).

Rorty's discussion of morality concentrates, to a great extent, on the notion of solidarity. For him, morality is not about looking for universal principles – with regard to morality, as with other things, Rorty emphasizes the approach of the ironist. The following quote sheds light to Rorty's handling of the question of morality, and it has to be kept in mind that Rorty considers himself an ironist: "Literary criticism does for ironists what the search of universal moral principles is supposed to do for metaphysicians." (ibid 80)

The sense of human solidarity of an ironist is based on a sense of common danger, not on a common possession of a shared power; this relates to the issue of social bond: "[Ironist] thinks that recognition of a common susceptibility to humiliation is the only social bond that is needed." For an ironist, human solidarity is not a matter of sharing a common truth or a common goal but of sharing a common selfish hope that one's world will not be destroyed (ibid 91–92).

In an interview between Marek Tamm and Märt Väljataga (2015), it was claimed that Rorty associated social atrocities with transferring one's noble aspirations from the personal sphere into the public life. Foundationalism and the search for truth should not break out of the personal sphere of the human being. Indeed, addressing the issue of challenges being imposed to liberalism, Rorty wrote that the best that one can do about those who pose such challenges is to ask them to privatize their projects, their attempts at sublimity. "This request for privatization amounts to the request that they solve an impending dilemma by subordinating sublimity to the desire to avoid cruelty and pain." (1989, 197)

Rorty saw a problem with deeming the argument of "common humanity" an explanation of moral behaviour of people. He claimed that the force of "us" contrasts with a "they" which is also made up of human beings – the wrong sort of human beings. (ibid 190) According to his reasoning, the argument that somebody is a "fellow soccer player" entitles a more convincing

explanation of moral action than "he is a fellow human being". Rorty writes it is evident there is something morally dubious about a greater concern for a fellow New Yorker than for someone who is suffering in the slums of Dakar. Regardless of that, he has presented his position thus: feelings of solidarity are necessarily a matter of which similarities and dissimilarities strike us as salient, and that such salience is a function of a historically contingent final vocabulary. Rorty claimed his aim is to disengage human solidarity from its "philosophical presuppositions" (ibid 192).

He went on to state that there is moral progress in the direction of greater solidarity, in the sense that there is a growing ability to think of people who are very different from ourselves as included in the range of "us". Rorty distinguished between the private and the social sphere of our lives, and our responsibilities for others, which constitute only the public side, have no automatic priority over personal motives (ibid 194). If we recall Arendt's portrayal of Adolf Eichmann, personal motives and careerism were mentioned on several occasions. They related to his memory and the actions for which he was on trial. A curious question arises – how is the choice between the social and public sphere of one's life to be made in particular cases that resemble that of Eichmann's? Is there anything about Eichmann's case that, according to Rorty's approach, would make it possible to judge his selfish choices as wrong?

It should be kept in mind that presenting a choice and deeming it non-automatic, non-obvious, does not automatically imply the randomness of the choice, even in the case of a lack of criteria. This is somewhat evident in Rorty's words (while rephrasing Sellars) that solidarity is made rather than found, produced in the course of history rather than recognized as an ahistorical fact (ibid 195). This, however, does not undermine the importance of solidarity, as "a *focus imaginarius* is none the worse for being an invention rather than a built-in feature of the human mind." (ibid 196)

Instead of dismissal, solidarity is integrated into the discussion of moral obligation in its own anti-foundationalist way: "The right way to take the slogan, "We have obligations to human beings as such" is as a means of reminding ourselves to keep trying to expand the sense of "us" as far as we can." (ibid 196)

"On a wider scale, the same is true: it is not possible to have a conversation with a Fascist. If anyone else speaks, the Fascist considers his intervention a brazen interruption. He is not

accessible to reason, because for him reason lies in other person's agreement with his own ideas." (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997, 210) This quote of Adorno's and Horkheimer's would indicate that Rorty's pragmatism is by no means reconcilable with Fascism. Indeed, we can find similar claims in Rorty's own writing. An example would be his claim that the liberal society is held together by a consensus that the point is to let everybody have a chance at self-creation to the extent that he or she is capable of, and that that goal requires besides peace and wealth, the standard "bourgeois freedoms" (1989, 84). This is Rorty's description of an ideal society.

11 ETHICAL RELATIVISM

According to the strongest form of relativism, we are supposed to admit that concepts like rationality, truth, reality, the right, good, or norms should be considered dependent on specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture. For a relativist, such a variety of conceptual schemes means that no certain or unambiguous meaning could be ascribed to the concepts of truth, reality, the good etc. (1983, 8). Bernstein has pointed out that ethical relativism should not be mistaken for ethical subjectivism. For example, relativism makes no such claim that there is necessarily anything subjective about those theoretical frameworks and conceptual schemes under question (ibid 12).

11.1 Ethical relativism in the context of totalitarianism

Bauman has described the argumentation logic of Adolf Eichmann's defence attorney, Dr. Servatius: „Moral evaluation is something external to the action itself, decided by criteria other than those that guide and shape the action itself." (Bauman 1989, 118) The standpoint presented by Dr. Servatius could be considered relativist, as it claims that the morality of the deed is decided by whether it has been committed by winners or losers.

This standpoint does not present subjectivism – it does not consider morality a matter of an individual's interpretation (even if the interpretation is dictated by the organization), but instead a matter of the conceptual scheme in which the winners, losers, and moral judgment relate to each other. As such, the argument legitimizes acts of violence and deeds that have been announced crimes against humanity by Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. This act of legitimization becomes possible by emphasizing the impossibility of disapproval. That claim stems from the following reasoning: if power gives the right, moral judgment becomes dependent on factors that are, in a way, external to the deed.

11.2 Rorty's pragmatism and its relation to relativism

"Contingency" is a keyword for Rorty; this, however, is related to the concept of "relativity", and there is a similar case with the term "ironist" (1989, 74):

> I call people of this sort "ironists" because their realization that anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed, and their renunciation of the attempt to formulate criteria of choice between final vocabularies, puts them in the position which Sartre called "meta-stable": never quite able to take themselves seriously because always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves.

The conviction that anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed fits with Bernstein's definition of relativism, which sees concepts such as the right or good as dependent on conceptual scheme or theoretical framework, and therefore ascribes no certain and unambiguous meaning to those concepts.

Regardless of that, Rorty was wary of the vocabulary which aims to sets philosophical ideas on the objectivist/relativist scale. Rorty's definition of relativism is also considerably different from Bernstein's. „Relativism is the view that every belief on a certain topic, or perhaps about any topic, is as good as every other. No one holds this view. Except for the occasional cooperative freshmen, one cannot find anybody who says that two incompatible opinions on an important topic are equally good." (Rorty 1980, 727) Therefore, we could say that Rorty associates relativist standpoints with certain randomness when it comes to judging the opinions. Rorty was critical of the notions relativism and absolutism, considering them to be leftovers of the Enlightenment – a superfluous vocabulary which needs to be substituted with a better one, as already mentioned earlier in this thesis (1989, 53).

Rorty has phrased the pragmatist approach to truth in the following way: truth is the property of sentences; the study the "essence of human knowledge" is to be understood only as exploring certain ways in which human beings interact, not as something that requires an ontological foundation (Rorty 1979, 175). In his approach to knowledge it is possible to witness the support of Wittgenstein's, Heidegger's, and Dewey's viewpoint that we have to abandon the understanding of knowledge as a correct representation. In addition to that, we can also find reluctance to distinguish privileged representations from the less-privileged ones (ibid 6, 174). Rorty's critique towards accounting for knowledge through the inner characteristics of the object of knowledge and through "essence" refers to a dependency on some conceptual scheme or theoretical framework; his concept of truth is also focused on

framework: “To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations.” (1989, 5).

11.2.1 The problem of the “moral privilege” of liberal freedom

The same problematics of relativism that has already been discussed in this work is also evident in Rorty’s pragmatist standpoints. He does not agree that liberal freedom would possess any “moral privilege” in comparison with, for example, Nazism or Bolshevism. Rorty advises us to give up on the idea that liberalism could be justified and Nazi or Bolshevist ideas “refuted”.

> This would mean giving up the idea that liberalism could be justified, and Nazi or Marxist enemies of liberalism refuted, by driving the latter up against an argumentative wall - forcing them to admit that liberal freedom has a "moral privilege" which their own values lacked. From the point of view I have been commending, any attempt to drive one's opponent up against a wall in this way fails when the wall against which he is driven comes to be seen as one more vocabulary, one more way of describing things. (ibid 53)

Comparing the given claim – the difficulty of justifying liberalism and the diversity of possible vocabularies – with the problem of deeming moral values subjective and subjective beliefs as unimportant in totalitarian societies, we can notice that in either case, morality is not handled as an immanent characteristic. Those viewpoints are also joined by an antifoundationalist approach, which omits moral values no firm basis. In Rorty’s case, it means that knowledge is not a relation between language and reality (which could offer a basis for knowledge); in the case of subjectivism, it means that moral values have no basis outside of the subject’s interpretations and experiences.

A closer look at the standpoint of Dr. Servatius about moral values, Eichmann’s defence attorney, we can see how relativism could be used in discussions of moral behaviour in totalitarianism. An aspect comes to light, which is clearly in conflict with Rorty’s pragmatism. When turning back to the statement referred to by Bauman, we can notice that certain *criteria* are mentioned. Rorty possesses a much different standpoint regarding the relation between criteria and moral values. Namely, he claims that there is no point in asking, “How do you *know* that Jones is worthy of your friendship?” Just the same way, there is no point in asking “How do you know that freedom is the chief goal of social organization?”, since those choices are not made on the basis of criteria, nor can those choices be preceded by

critical, assumptionless contemplation in no particular language and outside the historical context. (ibid 54).

Emphasizing the conversation as a desirable social practice relates quite closely to Arendt's concept of judgment, which entitles a communicative practice and a search for a common understanding.

> Common sense... discloses to us the nature of the world insofar as it is a common world; we owe to it the fact that our strictly private and "subjective" five senses and their sensory data can adjust themselves to a nonsubjective and "objective" world which we have in common and share with others. Judging is one, if not the most, important activity in which this sharing-the-world-with-others comes to pass (Arendt 1961, 221).

So we could also consider thinking (non-technical thinking, which means having a dialogue with oneself) a practice, which involves a social aspect: it is a process during which our subjective five senses have to adapt to the objective world that we share with others. This is also evident in Arendt's report about Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem, in which she claimed that the more one listened to Eichmann, the clearer it became that his inability to talk was closely linked to his inability to speak. Specifically, Arendt was referred to the inability to think from the viewpoint of someone else (2003b, 324).

It could also be observed that both Rorty and Arendt are critical about rationalism and technical, calculating thinking with regard to moral epistemology. This, as well, is related to handling justification as a social practice. Considerations and calculations based on the principle of efficiency, the machinery of bureaucracy in totalitarian states, in which the officials worked as "cogs", were all based on unemotional rationality. Arendt has also written about rational calculating thinking in concentration camps, as the administration was transferred from the storm troopers to hands of the members of the SS, describing how the former spontaneous bestiality was substituted with cold and systematic destruction of human bodies, calculated to destroy human dignity; death was avoided or postponed indefinitely (ibid 492).

11.2.2 Rorty's response to the relativism critique

Michael J. Sandel (1984, 8) has drawn attention to the common critique of relativist approach (in this case, the critique is aimed against a viewpoint presented by Isaiah Berlin):

> If one's convictions are only relatively valid, why stand for them unflinchingly? In a tragically configured moral universe, such as Berlin assumes, is the ideal of freedom any less subject than competing ideals to the ultimate incommensurability of values? If so, in what can its privileged status consist? And if freedom has no morally privileged status, if it is just one value among many, then what can be said for liberalism?

Indeed, similar thoughts are encountered in Rorty's discussion on the suspicion that ironism often awakes: "When [an ironist] claims that her redescription is better, she cannot give the term "better" the reassuring weight the metaphysician gives it when he explicates it as "in better correspondence with reality". Ironist is blamed for an inability to empower, and she cannot offer the same sort of social hope as metaphysicians offer; instead, in the case of the ironist, the ability to conquer the forces that are against the ironist is a matter of weapons and luck, not a matter of having truth on her side (1989, 90–91).

Regarding weapons, it would be useful to point out an interesting difference between Bauman and Rorty's understanding of the weapons we use in the social fight: For Bauman, there are 3 powerful weapons that are used all too seldom, hope, courage, and stubbornness (2008, 30). For Rorty, the weapons that are to be used entitle, first and foremost, vocabularies, if we take into account how he portrayed the ironist.

However, according to pragmatism, the claim that truth is not "out there" – as a contact with reality, a relation between the human being and an object – does not yet indicate that we should abandon the idea of justification. Justification, namely, is a matter of social practice according to Rorty's view. "In order to defend Sellars and Quine, I shall be arguing that their holism is a product of their commitment to the thesis that justification is not a matter of a special relation between ideas (or words) and objects, but of conversation, or social practice." (Rorty 1979, 170)

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty raised a similar question, namely, "Is absence of metaphysics politically dangerous?" (1989, 87) Among the reasons why metaphysics is commonly deemed essential for liberalism, Rorty pointed out that when seeing men and women as nothing more than sentential attitudes, human nature as well as human solidarity would begin to look like eccentric and dubious idea. This concern is fed by the underlying

assumption that solidarity with all possible vocabularies seems impossible. To turn to the question how Rorty himself saw the connection between liberalism and ironist/pragmatist viewpoints, we should take a look at how he presented the common problem. Namely he pointed out that there is a sense that the connection between ironism and liberalism is very loose, and that between metaphysics and liberalism pretty tight, and this sense makes people distrust ironism in philosophy and aestheticism in literature as "elitist". And, indeed, Rorty claimed there is something right about those suspicions – ironism results from awareness of the power of redescription, but redescription may make one's final vocabulary seem powerless and obsolete, which is humiliating (ibid 89–90).

A solution might be found if we consider Rorty's emphasis on the distinction between redescription for private and public purposes. Redescription for public purposes has to take into account all the various ways in which other human beings whom the ironist might act upon can be humiliated (ibid 92).

11.2.3 Vocabulary and its moral-epistemological relevance

"All human beings carry about a set of words which they employ to justify their actions, their beliefs, and their lives ... I shall call these words a person's "final vocabulary"." (ibid 73) In this quote, the connection between a person's final vocabulary and moral values is quite clear – values have something to do with how we justify our actions, for example. However, a question about the moral-epistemological relevance of final vocabularies arises.

Rorty favoured a diversity of final vocabularies, which, in his thinking, was to be clearly preferred to a lack of such diversity. This is presented by Rorty's portrayal of a liberal ironist, who has already been described above. Speaking of doing harm in the society, Rorty fixed liberal ironist's standpoint: her hope is that she will not be limited by her own vocabulary when faced with the possibility of humiliating someone with a quite different final vocabulary (ibid 93). Here, a clear incompatibility between Rorty's ironist fondness for diverse vocabularies and totalitarian aspirations comes to light: totalitarian humiliation does not seek further vocabularies, but, according to the examples we have at hand, does quite the opposite: it narrows the possible vocabularies down to the one that it has itself established.

To shed light to the importance of the discussion of vocabularies in the context of totalitarianism, it is useful to consider the historical example that is offered by Holodomor, a famine that occurred in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine from late 1932 to the summer of 1933. It killed approximately 5.5 million to 6.5 million people. Holodomor has been called "the worst ever Soviet famine" by some scholars.[6]

With regard to the language regime established by the leadership of the Soviet Union at the time of the famine, Robert Kindler from Humboldt University of Berlin has used the term "forced trust" (2014, 272). The language regime included making the topic of famine into a taboo. This is confirmed by the survivor testimonies analysed by Vsetecka (2014, 19): "One survivor recalls how silent people became at work about the events taking place. Butkovska states: "At work no one spoke of the famine or of the bodies in the streets, as if we were all part of a conspiracy of silence."" Silence therefore characterizes to a great extent the disaster-time communication between people and government in the case of Holodomor.

Another, similar example that shed light to the connection between totalitarianism and language rules, could be found in Arendt's report about Eichmann's trial, in which she claimed that all correspondence referring to the [Final Solution] was subject to rigid "language rules", and it is rare to find documents in which such bald words as "extermination", "liquidation" or "killing" occur. Instead, specific code names were prescribed for killing. "For whatever other reasons the language rules may have been devised, they proved of enormous help in the maintenance of order and sanity in the various widely diversified services whose cooperation was essential in this matter." (Arendt 1994, 85)

Arendt pointed out that the very term "language rule" meant what in ordinary language would be called a lie (ibid 85). Handling the question of taboos in language, Rorty has referred to something similar to totalitarianism – indeed, parallels are evident. He described a general agreement in society that certain questions were always in point, certain questions prior to certain others, and there was a fixed order of discussion, and flanking movements were not permitted. We can see that in both cases that were just presented here, language regime during

[6] Kindler, R. (2014) „Famines and the Political Communication in Stalinism. Possibilities and Limits of the Sayable"

Holodomor as well as language rules in the Third Reich served the purpose of narrowing the amount vocabularies. Indeed, Rorty has pointed out how problematic such an act of narrowing is. "That would be just the sort of society that liberals are trying to avoid – one in which "logic" ruled and "rhetoric" was outlawed." (Rorty 1989, 51)

However, in the case of totalitarianism, we do not only deal with decrease in the number of vocabularies, but also with the shrinking of existing vocabularies. This is an interesting point, as it links Arendt's and Rorty's thought with regard to use of language. Namely, in Arendt's report about Eichmann's tied a poor use of language with banality of evil, and an inability to think. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem,*Arendt suggested that for Eichmann, Officialese is his only language, and pointed to a frequent use of stock phrases and clichés in the speech of the accused. "The more one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to *think*, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else." (1994, 49)

This thought of Arendt's would also be a good explanation for preferring many different vocabularies. There is an interesting similarity between Arendt's emphasis on thinking and Rorty's emphasis on the diversity of vocabularies: both emphases are "unfounded" in the sense that no firm basis is sought to either thinking in the sense of what Arendt had in mind, nor to diverse final vocabularies, and they are desirable regardless of the lack of grounding that could be offered to those practices. The thinking that Arendt emphasized as important for moral behaviour, is entirely without results (1971, 21); similarly, an ironist who is aware of the power of redescription, does not claim to have truth on her side (Rorty 1989, 91).

The lack of language rules is, for Rorty, a characteristic of liberal society. It is also something that he associates with anti-foundationalism with regard to epistemology: a willingness to recognize the results of open and free encounters as true.

> A liberal society is one which is content to call "true" whatever the upshot of [free and open] encounters turns out to be. That is why a liberal society is badly served by an attempt to supply it with "philosophical foundations". For the attempt to supply such foundations presupposes a natural order of topics and arguments which is prior to, and overrides the results of, encounters between old and new vocabularies (ibid 52).

By that, Rorty proposed the foundationalist nature of totalitarian arrangements. Foundation-seeking could then be seen as something that characterizes totalitarian societies; indeed, the examples that are brought to us by Kindler and Arendt seem to confirm this point of view.

Rorty's connection between liberalism and ironism is mediated through the diversity of vocabularies, more specifically: it is the ironist's ability to grasp the function of many different sets of words that makes her liberal (ibid 94). Rorty has associated the approach to language which sees it as something that safeguards the interests of reason and preserves morality-prudence distinction, with an approach that sees language as a medium in which to find truth that is out there in the world, or deep within the self. However, this does not keep Rorty from asking "Why do you talk that way?" I.e., the idea of justification as such has not been abandoned. In fact, Rorty sees relativism and irrationalism as specters haunting the liberal culture (ibid 51, 52).

11.3 The contribution of Rorty's pragmatism to the moral-epistemological analysis of totalitarianism

As already mentioned, Rorty wished to leave aside the distinctions and vocabulary that stem from the times of Enlightenment, including the distinction between relativism and universalism. His standpoints help us understand the possible applications of relativism and the problems that accompany it, especially in the context of totalitarianism.

Even though his definition of relativism is rather drastic, a closer look to Rorty's pragmatism in combination with Bernstein's definition of relativism could offer some interesting perspectives to consider. For example, new light will be shed on the issue of criteria and their problematic nature with regard to ethical relativism. Using Rorty's vocabulary, it is possible to explain the relegation of values to the realm of subjectivity (in totalitarian societies) in the following way: by denying those moral virtues and values that do not coincide with those of the organization, totalitarianism excludes the diversity of vocabularies.

Ethical relativist standpoints are problematic in the context of totalitarianism, if we think about relativism while emphasizing the ideology, idealism, and the subjectivity of moral values. Such moral relativism is based on some criteria (recalling Dr. Servatius' argument), which determine the morality of a deed. However, pragmatist approach opens the other side of ethical relativism, without any dwelling on criteria. In fact, Rorty has claimed that moral choices are not made on the basis of criteria, nor rationality. Here, historical comparison comes to play, being important for justification.

> Such a [liberal] culture would not assume that a form of cultural life is no stronger than its philosophical foundations. Instead, it would drop the idea of such foundations. It would regard the justification of liberal society simply as a matter of historical comparison with other attempts at social organization – those of the past and those envisaged by utopians (ibid 53).

Such a justification, according to pragmatism, depends not on the ruling ideology, political mission, or idealism, but instead on consensus and conversation as a social practice. Regarding issues of morality, we cannot ask, "How do you know?", but only "Why do you talk that way?" (ibid 51)

None of the criteria-based answers to the question "How do you know that Jones is worthy of your friendship" could allay the doubts, as such a question seeks an epistemic position which is unlikely to be found with regard to questions of any moral importance (ibid 54). Rorty's claim is that just as friends are not chosen on the basis of criteria, supporting social institutions also should not dwell on criteria. In a way, it is an example of the importance of intuition and conversation in Rorty's moral epistemology, as he tied criteria with what he called "presuppositionless critical reflection".

This explains the reluctancy to support the choice of social institutions with criteria in the following way: namely, if such choices dwell on criteria, we would need to assume a position that is outside history, the contingency of language, and similar factors that influence our choices. As we do not possess that sort of a position, criteria fall out of the game. Rorty pointed out that there is no neutral, noncircular way to defend the liberal's claim that cruelty is the worst thing we do (ibid 197). Here, again, we are facing Rorty's idea that we cannot drive the political opposites of liberalism against "an argumentative wall". In addition, he suggests that we need to separate questions about pain from questions about the point of human life. We could say that he distinguishes questions of solidarity from a pursuit of philosophical foundations. He considered it important that the domain of the liberal is distinguished from the domain of the ironist, so that a person can be both (ibid 198).

12 CONCLUSIONS

Totalitarianism, as we have seen, is a political phenomenon that offers ample food for thought in the field of moral epistemology. My aim was to offer an analysis that would elucidate the complex relations between different moral epistemological issues that could be brought to light by considering how totalitarianism has been depicted and presented by 20th century thinkers.

The results of that reflection speak not only of interesting relations between different philosophical standpoints, but also of the ways in which the ideas of Arendt, Milgram, Bauman, Kant, Rorty, Gadamer and Bernstein are connected, complement each other, and could be seen as contributing to the same discussion. However, to use Bernstein's idea, this is not to say that the thinkers discussed in the thesis all say "the same thing", or their conflicting viewpoints could, in the end, be reconciled in some grand synthesis (1983, 176).

I started off by discussing Arendt's concept of banality of evil. Its relevance for the argumentation of my thesis is highlighted in Arendt's claim that since (banal) evil stems from the inability to think, thinking is to be seen as a basic practice necessary for moral behaviour. This inability to think was for Arendt closely connected with the willingness to change a set of values for any other, which is something that happened in totalitarian states. Considering this willingness led us to the issue of objectivism in the context of totalitarianism (given its relation to certainty, and a search for foundations and framework).

The willingness to change a set of moral values for a new one links to Bauman's idea about the relegation of personal (moral) convictions to the realm of subjectivity, and a high appreciation of a supra-individual mission in totalitarian societies. Bauman's discussion of the idealist figure and the internalization of the organization's values led to a contradiction that could be phrased thus: if the values of the organization were to be made an individual's own, they became part of his/her subjectivity. Seeing this process of internalization as a virtue, then, would indicate that as a result, every person's subjective values (which "ideally" coincided with those of the state) were of great importance. In attempting to solve this apparent contradiction, it was helpful to consider what is meant by the relegation of values to the realm of subjectivity – namely, by neutralization of personal convictions, we could

understand questions of conscience and moral law within, or to phrase it in Bauman's vocabulary, our being for the other, and a sense of responsibility.

The virtue of recognizing an organization's values as one's own relates to language regimes and their relevance for the mindset of people, as language regimes in totalitarian societies often serve the ideology and the political aspirations of the state. In the thesis, the example of language regime during Holodomor was considered. This kind of a discussion actually means touching the relations between language, thought, and politics, and this thematic in itself would be a very interesting field of study. Language regimes offer a set of rules and a limited vocabulary for communication: both of them are points that link to the ideas presented by Arendt and Rorty.

To turn to Rorty, let us continue with the question of language and vocabulary in the context of analysing moral epistemology in totalitarianism. For Rorty, a diversity of vocabularies is desired in an ideal society; this is one of the indications that Rorty's philosophical project could not, in many aspects, be reconciled with the political phenomenon of totalitarianism, including its affinity for language regimes. His support for the idea of a diversity of vocabularies relies upon concept of contingency, and especially, contingency of language – the fact that there is no way to step outside our various vocabularies, and find a vocabulary that would cover all possible ways of judging and feeling (1989, xvi). Bringing together the insights of Bauman and Rorty, we could explain the neutralization of personal convictions and deeming them to belong to the sphere of "mere" subjectivity in the following way: by denying and dismissing the moral values and virtues that do not coincide with those of the organization, totalitarianism excludes the diversity of vocabularies.

Contingency, in Rorty's philosophy, goes hand in hand with the claim that truth is not "out there". This should also make us admit that there are no philosophical bases for our values. Indeed, it is evident in Rorty's approach to solidarity, namely, he pointed out that there is contingency regarding whom we consider to belong among "us". This, however, does not indicate the irrelevance of solidarity; Rorty associated moral progress with widening the range of "us", and including more people in it (ibid 192).

To show the connection between Arendt and Rorty, it would be useful bring out that both of them emphasized the importance of practices that did not admit of the relevance of firm bases

or philosophical foundations: thinking, as Arendt handled it, and Rorty's support for the idea of various different vocabularies in ideal society. Both thinking and diversity of vocabularies were presented by Arendt and Rorty as desireable independently of any search for grounding.

The thesis focused on the issue of moral epistemology in totalitarian societies by outlining the complex relations between epistemological viewpoints that can be found in the works of philosophers and political thinkers whom I have mentioned. The aim was to analyse those viewpoints in the context of totalitarian societies and shed some light on the problems that such political arrangements revealed and posed in the field of morality, especially with regard to the question of the origins of moral knowledge. This was done by linking different thinkers' and philosophers' thoughts to one another, and finding relatons between their different ways of thinking.

The relevance of handling the aforementioned topics, from the perspective of culture theory, becomes evident by considering some of the interests of culture theory: meaning-making, gaining an understanding of the social and political sphere by means of philosophical analysis, the relations between language/ideas and social engineering, all of which have a relation of their own to the main question of this work, namely – how the conduct of people in one particular kind of political arrangement could be analysed and interpreted (but not explained) in epistemological terms. Such an analysis might help us understand the moral-epistemological aspect of totalitarianism.

Of course, it has to born in mind that in this thesis, approaches to totalitarianism are studied – as it is not a work of historical or sociological research, we cannot make bold claims about the reality of totalitarianism as such. This would require a separate study, focused on the historical knowledge that we have about the totalitarian states that are under heightened attention. If a study which is based on approaches to totalitarianism (such as my thesis, for example), is integrated into a more historical and sociological study, then, even if only certain philosophical features of totalitarianism were studied, it is quite likely that we have made a big step towards understanding the phenomenon of totalitarianism.

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